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# LETTERS

TO

## DR. HORNE, DEAN OF CANTERBURY;

TO THE

YOUNG MEN, WHO ARE IN A COURSE OF EDUCATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY, AT THE UNIVERSITIES OF OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE;

TO

## DR. PRICE;

AND TO

## MR. PARKHURST;

On the Subject of the PERSON of CHRIST.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.
AC. IMP. PETROP. R. PARIS. HOLM. TAURIN. AUREL. MED. PARIS. HARLEM. CANTAB. AMERIC. ET PHILAD. SOCIUS.

Tandem Ductores, audita cæde ſuorum,
Conveniunt ——

VIRGIL.

BIRMINGHAM,
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THE

# PREFACE.

THE readers of this controverſy concerning *the perſon of Chriſt*, will, I doubt not, congratulate themſelves on ſeeing it in new hands, and in thoſe of perſons who promiſe to conduct it both with better temper, and with more knowledge of the ſubject, than it was done by Dr. Horſley.

According to appearance, we muſt now deſpair of hearing any thing more from the Archdeacon of St. Albans. But this is not to be regretted, while ſuch a man as the Dean of Canterbury has announced his entrance into the ſame field of combat, while Mr. Howes (though his motions are more tardy than he gave us reaſon to expect they would be) remains in it; while Mr. White, the learned profeſſor of Arabic at Oxford, diſcovers ſo much laudable zeal in the cauſe of

orthodoxy; and while others, of no leſs erudition*, I am informed, are preparing to join the corps, now that they ſee the danger to be preſſing.

Indeed, in a caſe of ſo great emergency, when ſo much may be loſt, viz. the uninterrupted poſſeſſion of ages, and ſo much *honour* (to ſay nothing of *emolument*) is to be acquired by preſerving it, who that has any confidence in his proweſs would not crowd to the ſtandard, erected by the Dean of Canterbury, who ſo loudly calls upon all the friends of orthodoxy, to *contend earneſtly for* THEIR *faith?* Without any diſparagement to this truly learned and worthy dignitary, I hope his call will ſoon be anſwered by numbers, ſtill higher in rank, and in fame, than even himſelf.

To be perfectly ſerious; I muſt acknowledge that it gives me more pleaſure than I

* In this I alluded more particularly to *Mr. Parkhurſt*, whoſe work having appeared ſince this Preface was written, I have had an opportunity of replying to it at the cloſe of the preſent publication.

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can expreſs, to ſee ſuch a proſpect of this very important queſtion, concerning *the perſon of Chriſt*, being thoroughly diſcuſſed, and perhaps finally terminated; ſo that the generality of thoſe who give attention to theſe ſubjects, may have reaſon to think, that every conſideration on which their judgment ought to be formed, will be fairly before them; that every weak or doubtful argument will appear to be ſo, and that nothing will remain in the ſcale, but what has unqueſtionable weight.

The learned and inquiſitive will then no longer *halt between two opinions*. If Chriſt be truly *God*, they will receive and honour him as ſuch; but if he be only *a man* ſent by God; they will honour him as the ambaſſador of God, not ſo much regarding himſelf, as *him that ſent him*. And whatever ſhall be the ſettled opinion of the *learned*, it will, in due time, become that of the unlearned, and of the chriſtian world in general. To be the inſtruments in the hands of Divine Providence in bringing about ſo great

an event, is ſo honourable, that I hope it cannot fail to excite the laudable ambition of many. Such an opportunity of diſtinguiſhing themſelves, and of ſerving the cauſe of truth, may not ſoon occur again.

I feel more particular ſatisfaction in that part of this generous conteſt which relates to Dr. Price; partly becauſe it is the firſt opportunity that has been afforded me of diſcuſſing in this manner the ſubject of *Arianiſm*; and alſo becauſe it enables me to give another example of the manner in which I moſt wiſh to conduct a controverſy; to ſhew that friends to each other may, at the ſame time, be greater friends to *truth*, and that they can even *earneſtly contend* for this, without the leaſt hazard of a breach in their friendſhip.

It is too common for perſons engaged in controverſy to loſe ſight of *truth*, and to contend for *victory* only. And when that is the object, thoſe paſſions which enter into other conteſts, which have the ſame object,

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enter into this; and the effect is both unpleaſant in itſelf, and in a variety of reſpects, unfavourable to the cauſe of truth. But in our former diſcuſſion of the doctrines of *materialiſm*, and *neceſſity*, nothing of this kind appeared on either ſide, and the door ſhall be as religiouſly ſhut againſt it in this.

That diſcuſſion was brought to its proper termination; each of us having advanced every thing that we thought proper in ſupport of our reſpective opinions, and then we made a joint publication of the whole. In this caſe, my friend has declared his reſolution not to engage in any controverſy; and, as the time is approaching, when I may think proper to make a ſimilar reſolution, I ſhall not urge him on the ſubject. But I write with his full conſent; and we both of us earneſtly wiſh that ſome other common friend, at leaſt ſome other learned Arian, who, like him, ſhall be actuated by a pure love of truth, may take his place. Whoever he be, I will engage that he ſhall have no reaſon to complain of *me*. He

ſhall have nothing to fear but fair diſpaſſionate *argument*; and if he be worthy to ſucceed Dr. Price, it will be a matter of indifference to him, whether the friendly conteſt end in his favour, or in mine.

My highly valued friend will himſelf not fail to give due attention to what we write; and if he ſhould ſee reaſon to change his opinion with reſpect to any particular article in the diſcuſſion, I have no doubt but that he will generouſly avow it in the future editions of his *Sermons*. Should he be induced to abandon Arianiſm altogether (O that this were not too much to be expected of *man*) I have as little doubt, that he would take an early opportunity of acknowledging it, and with that ingenuous frankneſs which marks his character. In this caſe, we ſhould perhaps alſo have from his hand, a ſtriking view of the Socinian, or as he himſelf would then call it, the only proper *unitarian* doctrine. There is an energy in what he delivers, as coming directly from the heart, which few writers have attained.

It is not mere mental ability that can enable a man to write like him. It requires perfect integrity, as well as a ſound underſtanding. Better were it to be in any error with ſuch a heart, than have the beſt head, and hold all truth, without it.

Writing to the Dean of Canterbury, who is at the head of a college in Oxford, I was inſenſibly led to addreſs myſelf to *the young men who are in a courſe of education for the chriſtian miniſtry at the two univerſities*. For this, I hope, to obtain their pardon, if not their thanks. What I have done proceeds from an earneſt deſire to awaken their attention to a ſubject that moſt nearly concerns them, and through them *the public*, whom they are deſtined to ſerve.

To have gone on, as many have done, from generation to generation, ſubſcribing what they have not conſidered, and then maintaining it becauſe they have ſubſcribed it, and becauſe they would be diſtreſſed if they

ſhould

ſhould abandon at once the fruits of their ſubſcription, can only have ariſen from a want of attention to ſo ſerious a ſubject. The moſt important and the plaineſt of all truths may not be perceived, till it be diſtinctly pointed out. But when attention is excited, the ingenuous youth, who would otherwiſe have gone heedleſsly on, as thouſands have done before him, will ſtart at the apprehenſion of a wrong ſtep in his conduct, as at the ſight of a precipice before him; and then, whatever be the inconvenience of retreating, he will ſee that it muſt be better than to proceed.

May the *God of truth* open all our minds, and *lead us into all truth*; and eſpecially may he give us the courage to acknowledge it, when it is diſcovered. The conſequences of this may, in certain circumſtances, be painful, but they are temporary; whereas the conſequence of perſiſting in error, and of living in the perpetual violation of integrity, while it fills the ingenuous mind with

with anguiſh here, muſt be followed by much greater anguiſh hereafter. Such conduct requires only to be fairly exhibited. It muſt at once be ſeen to be unworthy of a man, and much more ſo of a chriſtian, and a chriſtian miniſter.

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As I wiſh not to trouble my readers with more publications in this controverſy than may be neceſſary; and I expect, at leaſt hope, to have many more antagoniſts than have yet appeared, I here inform them, that I ſhall not make an immediate reply to every particular publication, but ſhall generally wait a proper time, in order to take into conſideration what may be advanced by ſeveral of them, as I have done on this occaſion.

It is my earneſt wiſh that this important controverſy with trinitarians, and eſpecially with Arians, may come to a proper termination.

tion. Nothing, as I have more than once declared, ſhall be wanting on my part to bring it to this deſirable iſſue; and I pledge myſelf to the public, not to paſs without notice any objection to which I may be unable to make a ſatisfactory reply. If it relate to a ſubject of much conſequence, I ſhall not only make a frank acknowledgment of my miſtake, but take the moſt early opportunity of doing it; but if it only affect an article of ſmall conſequence, I may content myſelf with correcting my works, if they ſhould ever come to another edition. If any perſon think me ſuperior to my adverſaries with reſpect to force of *argument* (which can only ariſe from the goodneſs of the cauſe which I have eſpouſed) I am determined to give them proofs of a ſtill greater ſuperiority with reſpect to *ingenuouſneſs*.

Let it be underſtood, however, that this engagement relates only to the *hiſtory* that I have given of the riſe and progreſs of the trini-

trinitarian doctrine, of Arianiſm, and of unitarianiſm, in the early ages, which is a proper field for the *learned in eccleſiaſtical hiſtory*, and not to that branch of the controverſy which has been ſo long canvaſſed, that very little that is *new* can be expected to be advanced on any ſide, I mean the *doctrine of the ſcriptures* on the ſubject, any farther than it may be introduced incidentally, and in connexion with the hiſtorical diſcuſſion.

But this hiſtorical diſcuſſion, when the nature of it is well conſidered, cannot, as I have frequently obſerved, but be thought to decide concerning the whole controverſy. For, if it be true, as I have endeavoured to prove by copious hiſtorical evidence, not only that proper unitarians were in communion with the catholic church, and were not claſſed with *heretics*; but that the great maſs of unlearned chriſtians continued to be ſimply unitarians till the ſecond and third century, it will hardly be doubted but that their

their inſtructors, viz. the apoſtles, and firſt diſciples of Chriſt, were unitarians alſo, and therefore that no other interpretation of the ſcriptures than that of the *unitarians*, as oppoſed to that of the trinitarians, or Arians, can be the true one.

N. B. I am juſt informed that it was not Mr. Prettyman, but Dr. Prettyman himſelf, the preſent biſhop of Lincoln, who preached the *Sermon* mentioned p. 6. I ſhould be ſorry to fix a charge of illiberality on any wrong perſon; and I ſhall now with more confidence expect, from the high rank of his Lordſhip, that he will do me the juſtice I require.

THE

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# LETTERS

TO THE

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## ERRATA.

N. B. (*b*) ſignifies *from the bottom of the page.*

Page 16. Note, l. 1. for *Ruſtal*, read *Raſtal.*
—— 24. l. 4. (*b*) for *a reſpect*, read *reſpect.*
—— 97. l. 2. for *of*, read *of all.*
—— 101. l. 2. for *do.* read *no.*
—— —— l. 3. for *favourable*, read *favourably.*
—— 103. l. 6. (*b*) for *if*, read *of.*
—— 119. l. 16. for *were*, read *was.*
—— 128. l. 3. for *in*, read *is.*
—— 142. l. 11. (*b*) for *both*, read *but.*
—— 158. l. 3. for *purpoſes*, read *purpoſe:*
—— 163. l. 6. (*b*) for *himſelf*, read *myſelf.*
—— 167. l. 10. (*b*) for *converted*, read *concreted.*
—— 186. l. 4. (*b*) dele *or Dr. Kennicott.*
—— 187. l. 2 (*b*) *dele for it.*

# LETTERS

TO THE

# DEAN OF CANTERBURY.

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## LETTER I.

*Introduction, and of the Charge of Ignorance or Insincerity in the Defenders of the Doctrine of the Trinity.*

REV. SIR,

AFTER being engaged in a controverſy relating to the doctrine of the *trinity*, with ſome very inſolent, and, as I think I have ſhewn, inſufficient antagoniſts, I rejoice that in *you*, I have met with one who is truly candid, learned, and in every view reſpectable. You, Sir, are as ſenſible as myſelf of the importance of this diſcuſſion, and have the ſame wiſh to conduct it in the moſt proper, that is, in the moſt amicable manner, as lovers of truth, and not contenders for victory. "We "muſt not," you ſay, p. 9, "knowingly engage "in a bad cauſe, nor perſevere, if, in the proceſs, "we diſcover our cauſe to be a bad one. No miſ-

"chief," p. 15, "will arise from the discussion. "Truth always has been, and always will be, a "gainer by it."

With respect to the subject of this controversy, you very justly say, p. 2, "If the doctrine of the "trinity be not true, the christian church has been "guilty of *idolatry*," and though I do not think it is with equal justice that you add, "from the "very days of the apostles," it has certainly been the case from a very early period. Against an accusation of this magnitude, you, who hold the doctrine, certainly do well to defend yourselves, and to exert all your powers to repel the attack that is made upon you.

You agree with me in having no dislike to controversy in general, saying, p. 15, "it is a whole-"some exercise for us. It excites attention, and "prevents indifference, the enemy of all others "the most to be dreaded." In this, however, you differ very widely from Mr. Howes, who, though he voluntarily engages in this discussion, is of opinion that no good ever arose from controversy.

As you and I, Sir, agree in so many particulars, I flatter myself that, in due time, we shall be able to bring this important controversy to a proper termination, so that whatever may be the case with respect to ourselves, and others engaged in the discussion (for whose prejudices allowance will easily

eaſily be made) attentive readers will be able to perceive on which ſide the truth lies.

Before I proceed any farther, I wiſh to ſet you right with reſpect to a charge againſt me, that I am confident is ill-founded, viz. that I conſider all the defenders of the doctrine of the trinity as either ignorant, or inſincere, p. 30. I really cannot imagine on what it is that this ſuppoſition is founded; ſince, in a variety of places in my writings, I have expreſſed the greateſt reſpect for ſome of thoſe who have defended the doctrines of the church of Rome, as well as thoſe of the church of England; and I have no doubt of their being equal to any unitarians with reſpect to ability, learning, or integrity.

This charge, I ſuppoſe, you have adopted from Dr. Horſley, who advanced it in his *Letters to me*, p. 172. But you ſhould not have repeated it without having read, and noticed, my reply to him on that ſubject, in my *Second Set of Letters to him*, in which, among other things, I ſay, p. 213, "I "do not pretend to recollect all that I have writ-"ten; but I have ſuch a conſciouſneſs of never "having meant, or intended to ſay, what Dr. "Horſley here charges me with, that I will ven-"ture to aſſert that he cannot have any more au-"thority for *this*, than for the privileges granted "to the Jewiſh chriſtians of Jeruſalem on their "abandoning the ceremonies of their old religion.

" —I ſhall therefore conſider this charge of Dr. " Horſley as a mere *calumny*, till he ſhall produce " ſome evidence for it. And if, in any of my " writings, he *can* find ſufficient authority for his " accuſation, I here retract what I advanced, and " aſk pardon for it."

As Dr. Horſley did publiſh a Reply to my *Letters*, without producing any proof of his charge, I am at liberty to conſider it not only as *a calumny*, but as *an acknowledged one*, with the aggravation of his not having the grace to aſk pardon for it, which certainly a regard to truth, and to the public, called for. Since you, Sir, chuſe to take up the matter where he left it, I am under a neceſſity of calling upon *you*, to do what he ought to have done, or to acknowledge your inability to do it, and conſequently the injuſtice of your accuſation. I have the ſame right to call upon Dr. Parr, who has likewiſe recorded this accuſation in the notes to his *Sermon on Education*.

It is true that I do not think quite ſo highly of Dr. Horſley's literature as you do, but among other defenders of the doctrine of the trinity, I am far from denying *him* a competent ſhare of it: though he has, upon all occaſions, expreſſed the greateſt contempt for mine, beſides charging me repeatedly with the moſt *fraudulent practices* in the conduct of this controverſy. I wiſh his ingenuouſneſs had been equal to his ability, or his learning.

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As to *your* learning, Sir, no perſon who has ſeen your *verſion of the pſalms*, can call it in queſtion. and that you are a real believer in the doctrine of the trinity, as laid down in the Athanaſian creed, it is impoſſible to entertain a doubt, after your very ſolemn declaration to that purpoſe; when you ſay, p. 3, "I declare before God, in the ſincerity "of my ſoul, upon the beſt judgment I can form, "I am verily perſuaded it is the doctrine of the "ſcripture, and of the primitive church."

I am far from being offended at the compliment you pay Dr. Horſley, p. 22, as "evidently "an over-match for me, in point of literature," and do not wonder that you ſhould think, p. 15, that, "the thanks of the church of England are "due to him for his ſeaſonable, learned, and judi-"cious writings in her defence;" and therefore, that you ſhould urge him, "to occupy the depart-"ment he is ſo thoroughly qualified to fill, and to "go on, by fruſtrating the attempts of your adver-"ſaries, to deprive you of the argument from tra-"dition." I am only concerned that, in this, you ſeem to give up that important province to him, when, in my opinion, it would be much better occupied by yourſelf.

I do not know, however, how it is, but after the great exertions of this boaſtful champion of yours (whom all your encomiums and encouragement will not, I fear, be able to bring into the field

again) your church ſeems more ſolicitous than ever to procure more help, and from other quarters. Your own *ſermon*, the object of which is to exhort your friends to *contend earneſtly for the faith*, is a proof of this; and from many other publications, as well as the language that, as I am informed, is frequently held from many pulpits in different parts of the kingdom *; it ſhould ſeem that, notwithſtanding all that had been done by Dr. Horſley, the faith of the church, and conſequently the church itſelf, is ſtill *in danger*. Is all this "to *ſlay the ſlain?*" The leaſt that can be inferred from your ſermon is, that the controverſy is hardly well begun, and by no means that it is ended; and from your engaging in it, I flatter myſelf that it will be conducted in a manner infinitely more pleaſing, both to myſelf, and the public, as well as more ſatisfactory with reſpect to the object of it, than it is probable that it would have been, if it had continued in the hands of Dr. Horſley.

I am, with real eſteem,

Rev. Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

* I have heard that Mr. Prettyman, brother to Dr. Prettyman, ſecretary to Mr. Pitt, and now biſhop of Lincoln, preached a very virulent ſermon, in which my name was mentioned, before the Corporation of Norwich. I hope he is ſo much a man of honour, as to publiſh the ſermon, and thereby give me an opportunity of knowing, *from himſelf*, what he really *did* ſay of me, that, if it appear to me to be neceſſary, I may vindicate myſelf.

## LETTER II.

*Of the Argument from Antiquity, and of Dr. Horſley's Services with Reſpect to it.*

REV. SIR,

IT is evident from your exhortations to Dr. Horſley, and the whole tenor of your diſcourſe, that, notwithſtanding the ſtreſs you very juſtly lay upon the doctrine of the *ſcriptures*, you do not undervalue the opinion of the *primitive church*. You ſay, p. 31, "If the doctrine of our Lord's "divinity be not the doctrine of the ſcriptures, "and of the primitive church" (as if theſe muſt have been the ſame) "it matters not *how*, *when*, "or *by whom*, it was afterwards introduced. It "ſhould not have been received, and ought not "to be retained."

If, therefore, it can be proved by independent evidence, that the great body of primitive chriſtians were unitarians, *one* of the ſtrong holds of your faith is removed, and the other muſt be in great danger. For you could hardly have expreſſed yourſelf in the manner you have done, in the above quotation, if you had not thought ſome regard due to the ſenſe in which the primi-

tive chriſtians underſtood thoſe books of ſcripture, which were written more immediately for their uſe, and in a language with which they were perfectly acquainted; regard enough to render us doubtful of the different interpretations which may be given at ſo great a diſtance of time as the preſent, and under the influence of ſuch a maſs of prejudices as may be ſuppoſed to have been contracted in the courſe of ſeventeen hundred years.

It cannot be doubted, but that the primitive chriſtians really thought that their opinions, whatever they were, were contained in the ſcriptures, as theſe were the ſtandard to which they conſtantly appealed. When you ſay, therefore, of what I have written, as you chuſe to expreſs it, p. 31, "in four large volumes, concerning the Jews, "and the Gnoſtics, and the Ebionites, and the "Nazarenes; concerning Plato, and Philo, and "Juſtin Martyr, and Tertullian; concerning "philoſophers, Fathers, and heretics, many and "diverſe, but all unitarians*; concerning the "ſuppoſed caution of the apoſtles, and the meta-

* There is rather too much of rhetoric in this paſſage to be ſtrictly true. I am far from ſuppoſing that Juſtin Martyr, Tertullian, and many others of the Fathers, were unitarians. I have ſhewn that they were trinitarians, but not ſuch as the Dean of Canterbury would call ſo now, as they did not believe the perfect equality of all the three perſons, but uniformly held the inferiority of the Son to the Father, which Dr. Horſley muſt alſo do, as he maintains, that the Father is the *fountain of deity*, and has ſome unknown pre-eminence over the Son.

"phyſical

" phyſical and injudicious arguments and diſ-
" quiſitions of writers, whether ancient or mo-
" dern, upon any part of the ſubject; that all
" this, with the goodly edifice raiſed on ſuch a
" foundation, will fall directly to pieces, vaniſh
" into air; and, like the baſeleſs fabric of a vi-
" ſion, leave not a wreck behind;" your concluſion is rather too haſty.

If, Sir, what I have advanced in thoſe four volumes be juſt: if, from the various evidence that I have produced, it be indiſputable, as I think it is, that the primitive chriſtian church was unitarian; if all the explanations and defences of the doctrine of the trinity by thoſe who firſt broached it, and by thoſe who have ſince maintained it, be abſurd, and no better explanations or defences can be produced, the doctrine itſelf cannot be true; and no criticiſm upon any texts of ſcripture, if they can poſſibly bear an unitarian interpretation, can prove it to be ſo.

As you ſtrongly recommend the ſtudy of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, and that of the Fathers, I preſume that, though you wiſh Dr. Horſley to occupy this department in the preſent diſcuſſion, you have not neglected to give due attention to it yourſelf. Indeed, your deciding ſo peremptorily as you do, on Dr. Horſley's ſuperiority to me in that reſpect, ſhews that you think yourſelf qualified to judge between us. Permit me then to requeſt, that you would ſtate a little more particularly,

particularly, what the ſervices of Dr. Horſley in this province, which you commend ſo much, have really been. For I cannot ſuppoſe that you would have given ſo general and decided a judgment on the whole of the argument, without having examined all the particulars, of which that whole conſiſts.

As a lover of truth, then, and a candid ſcholar, pleaſe, whenever you publiſh your *large work*, to anſwer the following queſtions *ſeriatim*.

1. Has Dr. Horſley proved that thoſe who are called *Ebionites*, or *Nazarenes*, had no exiſtence in the age of the apoſtles, and that the latter had their name from Nazareth, on their retiring to that place after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by Adrian? Has he even proved that any of them were ever ſettled there at all?

2. Has he proved, as he undertook to do, that the Nazarenes, or Jerom's *Hebrews believing in Chriſt*, were orthodox with reſpect to the doctrine of the trinity * ?

3. Has he, after eighteen months re-conſideration of the ſubject, and correcting his former

* Since I wrote my reply to *Dr. Horſley's Remarks*, I obſerve that Dr. Lardner underſtood the paſſage in Jerom exactly as I did, taking it for granted, that by *Nazarenes* he meant the ſame people whom he called *Hebrews believing in Chriſt*. See his Teſtimonies, vol. 1. p. 19.

opinion,

opinion, proved (Remarks, p. 60) that there were, in reality, *five* ſects of Jewiſh chriſtians, though Origen and Euſebius expreſsly make them to be no more than *two*, ſome of them admitting, and others denying, the miraculous conception; but all of them diſbelieving the divinity of Chriſt, and adhering to the law of Moſes? If this is to be received as authentic hiſtory, let us have, at leaſt, the authority of the Dean of Canterbury for it, as well as that of the Archdeacon of St. Albans.

4. Has he proved that Origen, who expreſsly aſſerts that no Jewiſh chriſtians believed the divinity of Chriſt, was, in that, or in any other reſpect, a *wilful liar*; and therefore not to be credited in any thing, an article which he has laboured ſo much in his laſt publication?

5. Has he proved that there was a church of orthodox Jewiſh chriſtians at Jeruſalem after the time of Adrian?—another article on which he has beſtowed much pains in his laſt piece.

6. Has he invalidated any thing that I have advanced to prove that Athanaſius, and others of the Fathers, repreſented the apoſtles as having been obliged to uſe great caution in teaching the doctrine of the divinity of Chriſt, and that of the trinity, leſt it ſhould ſhock the prejudices of the firſt

firſt converts in favour of the doctrines of the unity of God, and the humanity of Chriſt?

7. Has he proved that the Jews in our Saviour's time were believers in the doctrine of the trinity, that they expected the ſecond perſon of it in the character of their Meſſiah, and conſequently that the apoſtles conſidered Chriſt as God from the time that they conſidered him as the Meſſiah?

8. Has he proved that the unitarians were conſidered as heretics in early times?

9. Has he proved that prayers for ſuccour in external perſecution are properly addreſſed to Chriſt?

10. Has he proved that by the *generation of the Son*, all the Fathers meant a *diſplay of his powers*, and not his aſſuming a *proper perſonality*, from having been a mere attribute of the Father?

11. Has he proved that there is no difference between the doctrine of the perſonification of the logos, and the peculiar opinions of the Arians: than which I have aſſerted that no ſchemes were ever more directly oppoſed to each other?

12. Has he proved the antiquity of the doctrine of the divinity of Chriſt from the writings of Barnabas, and Ignatius?

13. Has

13. Has he proved the origin of the Son, the ſecond perſon in the trinity, from the Father's contemplating his own perfections? an opinion, I believe, peculiar to himſelf, unſupported by any authority, ancient or modern. I think I perceive that, with reſpect to this curious particular, he has not given *you* entire ſatisfaction; ſince, with reſpect to *all* ſchemes to explain the doctrine of the trinity, you ſay, p. 42, "they leave us juſt "where we were, totally in the dark." Indeed, I do not wonder that a notion ſo ſuper-eminently abſurd, ſo void of all foundation in the ſcriptures, in common ſenſe, or primitive antiquity, ſhould not recommend itſelf to thoſe who do not wiſh to expoſe the doctrine of the trinity, as abſolutely ridiculous.

Indeed, Sir, to undertake the defence of your applauded champion on theſe articles (and I might have extended the liſt to many more) is an Herculean attempt. Greatly muſt the execution of it ſwell the work you have in hand, and well may you crave indulgence, p. 32, as to the article of *time*. I think it muſt appear, to all impartial readers, that Dr. Horſley has been completely foiled in his attempts to prove any one of the above-mentioned particulars, and every other that is of any importance to the real merits of the queſtion between us. And if this be the caſe, what ſignifies the great ſuperiority of his *learning*. Nay, if all his ſuperior ability, and

learning, has not enabled him to prove what he ſo earneſtly contended for, does it not afford an argument, that neither learning, nor ability, *can* be of any avail in the cauſe that he has eſpouſed?

Utterly unable to make any plauſible defence of himſelf in *other* articles, after waiting eighteen months, with an air of inſolence peculiar to himſelf (which you, Sir, tacitly condemn, by recommending a mode of conducting controverſy, the very reverſe of his) he challenged me again with reſpect to *the veracity of* Origen, and the exiſtence of a church of orthodox Jewiſh chriſtians at Jeruſalem after the time of Adrian. But in my Reply, which was immediate, I have ſhewn that, inſtead of relieving himſelf, he has involved himſelf in much greater confuſion and difficulty than ever; having groſsly miſunderſtood every one of the five paſſages from the Fathers which he produced in his defence. In this Reply of mine, which has been publiſhed about ſix months, I call upon him to defend himſelf, and his argument, in ſuch a manner as, I believe, there is no example of any perſon being called upon (except Mr. White, of Oxford, by myſelf). In the concluſion I ſay, "On this article, at leaſt, an article "deliberately ſelected by yourſelf, let the con- "troverſy between us come to a fair iſſue. No- "thing has been, or ſhall be, wanting on my part; "and therefore the public will certainly expect "your explicit and ſpeedy anſwer."

What,

What, Sir, can you think of a man who can ſit down contented without making any reply to ſuch a call as this? Had any perſon called upon *me* in this manner, he would have had my Reply (either vindicating myſelf, or acknowledging my inability to do it) in a week, or as ſoon as it had been phyſically poſſible for it to be diſpatched.

When you ſpeak of the great *learning* of Dr. Horſley, it is to be ſuppoſed that you ſpeak of ſo much of it as is *before the world*; and we have not yet ſeen enough to juſtify your very high encomiums. If the world ſhould happen to think leſs highly of it than you do, they may ſay that the thanks of the church of England were very lightly beſtowed.

To confine ourſelves to this controverſy (and you do not profeſs to look any farther) will you ſay that you infer his ſuperior learning from his tranſlating ἰδιώτης by the Engliſh word *ideot* *;

* If any authority could be wanting in ſupport of my interpretation of the word ἰδιώτης, I might quote that of the famous Bentley, whoſe learning will hardly be called in queſtion by Dr. Horſley himſelf. In his remarks on a work intitled, *A Diſcourſe on Free-thinking*, p. 118, he expreſſes himſelf in the following manner with reſpect to that very tranſlation of this word, which Dr. Horſley adopted, and Mr. Badcock defends.

" Ab *Idiotis Evangeliſtis*, By *idiot evangeliſts*, ſays our author; " who, if he is ſincere in this verſion, proves himſelf a very " *idiot* in the Greek and Latin acceptation of that word. " Ἰδιώτης, *Idiota*; *illiteratus*, *indoctus*, *rudis*. See Du Freſne " in his Gloſſaries, who takes notice that *idiota* for an *idiot*, or " *natural fool*, is peculiar to your Engliſh law, for which he " cites

from his arguing from the pronoun ὃς, as neceſſarily referring to *a perſon*; from his ſaying that ἐκ ἄλλῳ τινὶ ἢ cannot be rendered *by nothing but*; from his taking the part of Mr. Badcock in rendering ἄλλοι γὰρ καὶ ἄλλου τρόπου, *others on another plan*, or from his conſtruction of Jerom's *quid dicam?* Theſe are almoſt all the ſpecimens that he has exhibited of his profound acquaintance with the learned languages in the courſe of this controverſy; and, in the opinion of many, who are not without pretenſions to ſcholarſhip, it will not be to the credit of the Dean of Canterbury to praiſe any man ſo very highly on theſe accounts.

There are many alſo, who do not think ſo highly as you do of Dr. Horſley's merit with reſpect to the church of England, or the doctrine of the trinity, as one of its articles. And there are, I believe, at this moment, many unitatians, who think themſelves under greater obligations to him, than any trinitarians whatever. For to him has been owing, in a great meaſure, the preſent diſcuſſion of the ſubject, which muſt now proceed till the great queſtion be decided; and with reſpect to the final iſſue, judging from his acknowledged

" cites Ruſtal. Did Victor therefore mean *idiot evangeliſts* in " your Engliſh ſenſe? No, but *illiterate, unlearned.* What " then muſt we think of our author for his ſcandalous tranſ- " lation here. Whether imputation will he chuſe to lie un- " der, that he knew the meaning of Victor, or that he knew " it not?" Dr. Horſley muſt ſuppoſe the ſame queſtion put to himſelf.

ability

ability to defend the doctrine of the trinity, as far as it is defenſible, they entertain no doubt at all; being confident that ſcripture, reaſon, and antiquity, will be found equally in their favour.

It is the earneſt wiſh of all unitarians, and of none more than myſelf, that your high encomiums may bring your champion into the field again. I have done every thing in my power, and in my way, to ſecond your wiſhes. But as he took eighteen months to make his laſt reply, he may be like a comet, whoſe periodical revolution is that period of time, and if ſo, it will be in vain that we endeavour to accelerate the courſe of nature.

As you are ſo laviſh in your praiſe of *one* of your champions, I wonder you ſhould overlook the merit of others, ſuch as Mr. Burgh, who had the title of LL.D. conferred upon him at Oxford, for his anſwer to Mr. Lindſey; Mr. White, who has ſtepped into the arena with *looks* of ſtouter defiance than any of you, though his *deeds* do not ſeem to correſpond to them; and Mr. Howes, who has undertaken the moſt difficult department in the whole diſcuſſion, viz. to prove that the Jews were always trinitarians (which is the counterpart of Moliere's *Médecin malgré lui*) and that there were no unitarians at all till about the council of Nice. Time will ſhew how ingeniouſly he will maintain ſuch paradoxes as theſe.

I am, &c.

## LETTER III.

*Of the Interference of Civil Power in Matters of Religion.*

REV. SIR,

THERE is one article of conſiderable importance on which you have touched in theſe Sermons of yours, with reſpect to which you ſeem to be under a miſtake yourſelf, and will probably miſlead others. I wiſh, therefore, to ſet you right before the publication of your larger work.

You more than hint, that the conſequence of the general prevalence of unitarianiſm, will be the excluſion of trinitarians from the church. You even ſuggeſt, that it is our wiſh, and intention, to apply external force, in order to bring this about, whenever we ſhall think the times ſufficiently ripe for ſuch a meaſure. "A zealous anti-trinitarian," you ſay, p. 10, "may fancy that thoſe idolatrous "churches and kingdoms require to be quickened "in their progreſs towards deſtruction. He may "conceive himſelf to be in duty bound to become "an inſtrument in executing the vengeance of "heaven upon them, for refuſing to admit an Arian "or

" or Socinian reformation, tendered in a milder " way."

With reſpect to this inſinuation, I can only ſay, that nothing has yet been advanced by any unitarian that can give the leaſt colour to it. It is not conſiſtent with your uſual candour, and what no appearances whatever have made at all probable. Indeed, Sir, we ſee no occaſion to have recourſe to an *arm of fleſh*, in this conteſt. We have a certain proſpect of victory by the mere force of *argument*, and without any riſk whatever. I can appeal to the uniform tenor of all my writings, and eſpecially my *Addreſs to Proteſtant Diſſenters as ſuch*, if I have not always inculcated the moſt peaceable methods of promoting reformation, and have not even gone farther to recommend the patient ſuffering of wrong than moſt other writers.

I muſt produce another paſſage from your Sermons, relating to the intolerance of unitarians. " Let us only ſuppoſe," you ſay, p. 4, " that the di- " rection of eccleſiaſtical matters in this kingdom, " ſhould paſs into the hands of thoſe perſons who " regard the doctrine of the trinity as involving in " it an abſurdity equal to that of tranſubſtantiation, " and as being the grand obſtacle to the conver- " ſion of Jews, Mahometans, and Deiſts; who " deem the worſhip of Chriſt to be groſs idolatry, " and high treaſon againſt the majeſty of the one

" ſupreme God; muſt not the new unitarian " church, with its confeſſion and ſervices, be ſo " conſtituted, as utterly, and for ever, to exclude " us from becoming members of it? Moſt un- " doubtedly, and of neceſſity it muſt. An unita- " rian people, we are told, will not long be ſatiſ- " fied with a trinitarian eſtabliſhment. Indeed " I ſuppoſe they will not. They will endeavour " to overturn it, and it is our buſineſs to prevent " them from ſo doing."

Now, Sir, had you given more attention to the nature of the caſe, you could never have apprehended any danger to yourſelf, or to any trinitarians, from an unitarian liturgy, becauſe it would contain nothing offenſive to you, nothing in which you could not heartily join: whereas, we are abſolutely excluded from joining in your worſhip, by your trinitarian forms. While you acknowledge *one God* (which you always profeſs to do) you may ſurely addreſs your prayers to that one God, calling him, as you are authorized to do in the ſcriptures, *the maker of heaven and earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the one true God*, as our Saviour calls him, the great being who *ſent him*, who *raiſed him from the dead*, and who *gave him glory*. For it is to this God that all unitarians pray; and to a being of this deſcription you trinitarians may alſo pray, ſo long as you can accommodate to your notions this ſcripture language, and ſuppoſe Jeſus Chriſt

Chriſt himſelf, and the Holy Spirit, to be in any manner included in this definition, or deſcription, of *the one true God.* This is a mental proceſs of your own, with which yourſelves only are concerned, and in which we have nothing to do. If you can, by any means, accommodate ſuch language as that above mentioned to your peculiar ſentiments, in reading the ſcriptures, in which it perpetually occurs, you may do the ſame in our forms of worſhip.

We can now join in uſing the Lord's prayer, and in almoſt all the ſervice of the church of England, except the *litany*; ſo that there is very little that is offenſive to an unitarian in the whole of your afternoon ſervice. Remove, therefore, only your ſubſcriptions to articles of faith, and reform your morning ſervice after the model of that in the afternoon, and I believe you will remove the greateſt of our objections. We are not, I aſſure you, ſo fond of *ſchiſm* as to ſtand out for trifles; but do not compel, or tempt us, to pay ſupreme worſhip to a fellow creature, to a man like ourſelves; who, though highly honoured by God for his virtue and obedience, was ſo far from conſidering himſelf *as God*, that, with the moſt genuine humility, he always aſcribed every thing that he ſaid, or did, to his father that ſent him, and worſhipped him with the ſame deep reverence that he inculcated upon all his followers.

If, Sir, you would, without prejudice, look into *Mr. Lindsey's reformed liturgy*, you would soon be satisfied, that there is nothing in it but what you yourself could join in, with much devotion and advantage. Read, if you please, my own *Forms* of devotion *for unitarian societies*, and I am confident you will find nothing in them offensive to yourself, except the prayer for Easter Sunday; and to accommodate you, and other trinitarians, I shall have no objection to the omission of it. I will go much farther than *you* are disposed to do, for the sake of a peaceable accommodation.

But I do not expect, or hope for, any thing of an intermediate kind. Your system is so complex, and involves such an unnatural connexion of things ecclesiastical with things civil, that though you might know where to begin a reformation, you will never be able to agree among yourselves where to stop. It must, therefore, be done in a manner in which the leading persons in the church and state will not be the primary agents. When this will be effected, or by whom, I do not pretend to form any conjecture. This is not my business, but a much easier and plainer task, viz. to investigate, and to propagate that *truth*, which in God's own way, and his own time, cannot fail to bring about all that I wish; when a pure *unitarian worship* will be universally adopted, and with universal consent. In the mean time, do not you, and your brethren, *fear where no fear is*, or alarm others with

with apprehenſions of our intolerance, which if you ſeriouſly reflect, you cannot really entertain yourſelves.

I the leſs wonder at your not readily ſuppoſing that *we* would content ourſelves with the mere force of truth, when I ſee that, notwithſtanding your profeſſion of univerſal toleration, you cannot help intimating, that you think there is ſome reaſon for that *alliance of church and ſtate*, of which, as chriſtians, you ought to be aſhamed. In theſe very Sermons you more than inſinuate the *propriety*, if not the *policy*, of penal laws in matters of religion; when you ſay concerning the doctrine of the trinity, p. 47, that "it requires, and demands, the "ſupport of every ſtate wiſhing to enjoy the fa-"vour and protection of that God, who for gra-"cious purpoſes has revealed it." For how is a ſtate, as ſuch, to *ſupport* any particular doctrine, but by civil rewards and puniſhments? The civil power has no other method of ſupporting any thing. Theſe are its proper arms, which alone it can employ to effect all its purpoſes. The doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is ſupported in the ſame manner. Like the doctrine of the trinity, *it requires* and *demands* ſuch ſupport. Happily, unitarianiſm neither requires, nor demands it, any more than chriſtianity itſelf did for the ſpace of three hundred years. Nay, they both are able to make their way in ſpite of all the oppoſition that

your preſent ſupporters and protectors, the powers of this world, can give to them.

I ſhould think, Sir, that a man of your good ſenſe, could not but ſee, that any mode of religion is in a very unnatural and aukward predicament, which *requires*, and *demands* any *civil ſupport*, becauſe it throws itſelf under the protection, and is of courſe at the mercy, of a power which may equally promote truth or falſehood, chriſtianity, mahometaniſm, or paganiſm. For if the civil power, as ſuch, has a right to eſtabliſh any one mode of religion, it muſt have the ſame right to eſtabliſh any other. If this great buſineſs be left to the diſcretion of our civil governors, it muſt alſo be left to their indiſcretion. And what judges can you ſuppoſe ſuch perſons as conſtitute our two houſes of parliament to be of theſe matters? Yet I am willing to think they may be as able theologians as thoſe who have the ordering of theſe things in other countries.

Would you truſt the members of our parliament with the choice of your phyſician, or allow them to preſcribe the mode of treatment of you, if your life was in danger; or would you think of appealing to them with a reſpect to the truth of a theory in philoſophy; and yet I think them as likely to decide juſtly in a caſe of *medicine*, or *philoſophy*, as with reſpect to *religion*.

I am, &c.

## LETTER IV.

*Of some particular Arguments for the Doctrine of the Trinity.*

REV. SIR,

I WISH not to enter into the discussion of any particular arguments for the doctrine of the trinity at this time, reserving myself till the publication of your *large work*; and for the execution of this I am willing to give you as much *time* as you request, p. 32, since you say you wish (and in this I sincerely join you) "to execute the work "with care and attention;" as we shall then, I doubt not, see all that *can* be urged in support of your opinions. But there are a few things that it may not be improper to apprize you of before hand; and you may take, or neglect, the hints I shall give, as you shall see reason.

You say, Note, p. 42, "All disputation con- "cerning the manner of the distinction, the man- "ner of the union, the manner of the generation, "and the manner of the procession, is needless "and fruitless. Needless, because, if we have "divine authority for the *fact*, it sufficeth. That "is all we are concerned to know. Fruitless, "because it is a disputation without ideas. Af-

"ter

" ter a long, tedious, intricate, and perplexed " controverſy, we find ourſelves—juſt where we " were—totally in the dark. Such has been the " caſe reſpecting this, and other queſtions. God " is pleaſed to reveal the fact, man inſiſts upon " apprehending the mode. In his preſent ſtate " he cannot apprehend it. He therefore denies " the fact, and commences unbeliever."

Now, Sir, you muſt know, that all this that you ſay reſpecting the doctrine of the trinity is continually ſaid by the catholics, in defence of the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. As a proteſtant, you yourſelf muſt allege, that every real *fact* has ſome *mode*, or *manner*, of being what it is, and every true propoſition muſt be underſtood in ſome ſenſe or other; and therefore, that if every conceivable mode, or manner of a fact, imply an impoſſibility, and every ſenſe of a propoſition imply an abſurdity, the doctrine itſelf is untrue, and therefore that it cannot be taught in the ſcriptures, if they teach nothing but truth. You, conſequently, explain thoſe paſſages of ſcripture which are urged in ſupport of the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, in a manner different from the catholics, who hold that doctrine; and if the literal ſenſe will not anſwer your purpoſe, you very properly, and ſenſibly, have recourſe to a figurative one, which is all that we are charged with doing, with reſpect to the doctrine of the trinity.

We

We ſay that every poſſible definition of that doctrine implies an abſurdity; and that the *fact* of the *trinity in unity* muſt exiſt in ſome manner or other, but that every conceivable mode or manner implies an impoſſibility, and therefore the exiſtence of the thing itſelf muſt be impoſſible alſo; and conſequently, that if it was neceſſary to interpret a few texts which you think teach that doctrine in the ſame, or a ſimilar manner, to that which you uſe with reſpect to thoſe that are ſuppoſed to teach the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, we ſhould be authorized to do it.

We do not wonder that ſenſible trinitarians are averſe to all diſcuſſion of the *mode* of ſubſiſtence of *three perſons in one undivided eſſence*; becauſe they have found that every attempt to define this ſubject has only tended to expoſe it to ridicule. But notwithſtanding this, no trinitarian who imagines that he *can* explain this myſterious doctrine, ever fails to propoſe his explanation, knowing the great advantage it would be to his argument, if he could hit upon any thing of this kind that would be unexceptionable. Witneſs the incredible number of illuſtrations of this doctrine among the ancients, and alſo among the moderns. and eſpecially the laſt moſt curious one of Dr. Horſley. *Though laſt not leaſt.* Nay, in boldneſs of thought, he has gone beyond any of his predeceſſors, maintaining that the production of the Son was the neceſſary conſequence of the Father's

ther's contemplating his own perfections. Athanaſius himſelf would have ſtood amazed at the ſublimity of the idea. Could you yourſelf, Sir, imagine that *you* had hit upon any new and happy mode of illuſtrating this doctrine, you would, I doubt not, think it no inconſiderable advantage to your argument. And who can tell what may be the reſult of the cloſe attention that you propoſe to give to your great work, in all the *time* that you may think proper to beſtow upon it.

You ſay, p. 37, that "the authority of all the "three perſons is the ſame, their power equal, "their perſons undivided, and their glory one." But if you do not uſe words without ideas, and which convey no more meaning than *Datiſi*, *Bocardo*, *Feriſon*, in logic, you muſt have ſome notion in your own mind in what *ſenſe* the propoſition to which you give your aſſent *may be true*. For otherwiſe you muſt think that it *may* be falſe, ſo that diſquiſitions concerning the *mode*, or *manner*, which you reprobate ſo ſtrongly, are abſolutely unavoidable for the ſatisfaction of your own mind.

All particular propoſitions are reducible to abſtract ones, and thoſe abſtract ones are predicable of other particulars. Now if it be true that *three divine perſons* may make only *one God*, it muſt be true in general, that *three* may be *one*, and alſo

*in*

*in the ſame ſenſe*, if each of the divine perſons want nothing to make them *perfect God*. But is this abſtract propoſition true of any thing elſe?

This reaſoning all proteſtants urge againſt the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. For if it be true, that the ſacramental *bread* may take the ſubſtance of *fleſh*, and yet retain every property of bread, the ſubſtance of *other* things may alſo be changed, while the properties remain unchanged. But if no ſuch change can be made to appear probable, in any other inſtance, you juſtly reject the ſuppoſition univerſally. In the ſame manner, I will undertake to ſhew that, on whatever principles you can defend the doctrine of the trinity, I can, *mutatis mutandis*, defend that of tranſubſtantiation. Take your own choice of arguments from reaſon, or from the ſcriptures.

With reſpect to ſeveral of your arguments from *the ſcriptures* (on which, as you reject all arguments from *reaſon*, you juſtly lay ſo much ſtreſs) inſtead of giving us the plain words of ſcripture, you give your own arbitrary conſtruction of it.

By "being baptized into the name of God," you ſay, p. 34, "can be meant no leſs than entering into a covenant with a perſon as God, profeſſing faith in him as ſuch, enliſting one's ſelf into his ſervice, and vowing all obedience and ſubmiſſion to him. Such is the natural, the

" the obvious import of this rite, by which we " are admitted into the church of Chriſt, this " ſolemn form of baptizing in the name of the " Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, " that is, into the faith, ſervice, and worſhip of " the Holy Trinity. For let us reflect a little. " The nations were to be baptized in the name " of three perſons, in the *ſame manner*, and there- " fore ſurely in the *ſame ſenſe*, as in the name of " one. Whatever honour, reverence, or regard, " is paid to the Father in this ſolemn rite, the " ſame we cannot but ſuppoſe paid to all three. " Is he acknowledged as the object of worſhip, " ſo are the other two perſons likewiſe. Is he " the God and Lord over us, ſo are they. Are " we his ſervants, ſubjects, and ſoldiers, enrolled " under him, ſo are we equally under all, &c.&c." You alſo ſay, Note, p. 3, that " baptizing in the " name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy " Ghoſt, is declaring the ſacred three to be one " God, and that no man who had been baptized " according to this form, could be ignorant of " the doctrine."

Now all this, as I have ſaid, is not *ſcripture*, but your own arbitrary *conſtruction* of ſcripture. Where do you find it laid down as a maxim, that baptizing into the name of any perſon is acknowledging that perſon for God? And how does *baptizing* in the name of three perſons imply their equality, any more than doing any thing elſe that reſpects

reſpects them all? May not three perſons, of very different ranks, be with propriety named together? Do we not read, 1 Chron. xxix. 20. that "the people of Iſrael *bowed down their heads, "and worſhipped the Lord and the king?*" By an argument therefore exactly, and in all its forms, ſimilar to yours, it may be proved that *God* and *the king*, being equally objects of worſhip, muſt be equal. Was not the *action* of bowing down, and the *manner* of performing it, the ſame reſpecting both? Muſt it not, then, have been done in the ſame *ſenſe*?

That the phraſe *being baptized unto a perſon*, or *in the name* of a perſon, which muſt be the ſame thing, does not imply that the perſon in whoſe name the baptiſm is made is God, may be clearly inferred from Paul's ſaying, 1 Cor. x. 2. that the Iſraelites were *baptized unto Moſes* (not *by* Moſes) *in the cloud and in the ſea*. He meant into the religion that was publiſhed by Moſes. Conſequently, being baptized *unto Chriſt*, or *in the name of Chriſt*, only means into the profeſſion of the religion which was publiſhed by Chriſt. This muſt be our inference, if it be allowed that the ſcriptures are their own beſt interpreters, the ſame phraſes being generally uſed in the ſame ſenſe. The *holy ſpirit* is uſed becauſe, according to the phraſeology of ſcripture, the goſpel was confirmed, or proved to be of God, by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Had

Had there been ſo much ſolemn and myſterious meaning implied in the phraſe of *baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit*, as you ſuppoſe; had it been intended as a ſtanding aſſertion of the doctrine of a trinity in the divine nature, it might have been expected, both that there would have been ſome expreſs declaration that this *was* the intent of it, and alſo that thoſe words ſhould always have been uſed when the office was performed. But no ſuch declaration of the meaning of the phraſe is to be found in the ſcriptures; and it is remarkable, that all the baptiſms we read of in the New Teſtament, are baptiſms *in the name of Chriſt* only. Muſt we ſay that this was another inſtance of the *caution* with which the apoſtles taught the doctrine of the trinity?

You ſay, p. 2, "that the Father, Son, and "Holy Spirit, are three perſons in one God, is a "truth propoſed to us as the ground of our hope, "our comfort, and our joy; as the principle on "which the conduct of life is to be framed, ac-"cepted, and rewarded." But ſurely, Sir, theſe aſſertions are moſt extravagant, and unauthorized. Admitting this doctrine of the trinity to be true, where do you find one text in which it is propoſed to us in any of theſe lights, as the ground of our hope, our comfort, or our joy; as the principle on which our conduct is to be framed, accepted, and rewarded?

Indeed,

Indeed, I do not think it poſſible to conceive how ſuch a doctrine as this can anſwer any of thoſe purpoſes. What ideas you annex to the terms *framing one's conduct upon the doctrine of the trinity*, I cannot imagine. How the doctrine of a future life, or that of the divine placability, are principles on which the conduct of life is to be formed, I clearly underſtand; becauſe the belief of them is of great uſe as a motive to good conduct. But how to make any ſuch practical uſe of the doctrine of the *trinity*, I no more perceive, than I do that its ſiſter doctrine of *tranſubſtantiation* ſhould be a practical one.

You ſay, p. 43, "Upon the very beſt authority "we are informed that Chriſt was the *lamb ſlain* "*from the foundation of the world*, that is (for it "cannot be otherwiſe underſtood?) ſlain in effect, "in the divine purpoſe, and counſel. It is like- "wiſe ſaid, that grace *was given us in Chriſt Jeſus before the world began*. The words intimate that "previous to the creation of the world, ſomething "had paſſed in our favour above, that the plan of "our future redemption was then laid, that ſome "agreement, ſome covenant relative to it, had been "entered into. Grace was given us not in our pro- "per perſons; for as yet we were not, we had no "being; but in the perſon of him who was after- "wards to become our repreſentative, our Sa- "viour—in Chriſt Jeſus. Now the plan muſt "have been laid, the covenant entered into, by the

" parties who have ſince been graciouſly pleaſed " to concern themſelves in its execution. Who " theſe are, we cannot be ignorant. It was the " Son of God, who took our nature upon him, " and in that nature made a full and ſufficient " oblation, ſatisfaction, and atonement, for the " ſins of the world. It was the Father who ac- " cepted ſuch oblation, ſatisfaction and atone- " ment. It was the Holy Spirit who came forth " from the Father and the Son, through the " preaching of the word, and the adminiſtration " of the ſacraments, by his enlightening, healing, " and comforting grace, to apply to the hearts of " men, for all the purpoſes of pardon, ſanctifica- " tion, and ſalvation, the merits and benefits of " that oblation, ſatisfaction, and atonement,"

This is a moſt remarkable example of drawing many and great concluſions from ſmall premiſes, indeed, from no premiſes at all. By *grace given us in Chriſt Jeſus before the world began*, can be underſtood nothing more, according to your own mode of interpretation, than that it was in the original counſel of God, that we ſhould be favoured with the bleſſings of the goſpel; which no more implies that *Chriſt* pre-exiſted, than that *we* ourſelves did. Beſides, no mention is here made of the Holy Spirit, and ſtill leſs of any *covenant* being made between the three, of the Son propoſing, the Father accepting, and the Spirit applying. This is not *interpreting*, but abſolutely *making* ſcripture. Where do

do you read of any ſuch covenant as this but in Milton's Paradiſe Loſt?

Really, Sir, the ſcriptures, in the plaineſt of all language, teach a doctrine the very reverſe of what you here lay down, viz. that God, even the Father, ſeeing the deplorable condition of mankind, of his own motion, ſent firſt the prophets, and then that *prophet mighty in word and deed* (Luke xxiv. 19) his own ſon, to ſave them; and confirmed his miſſion by thoſe miracles which are called *the gifts of his ſpirit*, or the ſame divine power that appeared in Chriſt; who ſays that *the words which he ſpake were not his own*, and that *the Father within him did the works*. Reconcile this language with your doctrine of the perfect equality of the Son to the Father, if you can.

I could, in like manner, eaſily go over your other arguments from ſcripture, and ſhew that all the foundations of this great article of your faith are equally weak. They are indeed, moſt apparently ſo. You cannot wonder then, that unitarians ſhould write with confidence, when they have nothing but ſuch arguments to anſwer.

I am, &c.

## LETTER V.

*Miſcellaneous Articles, and Concluſion.*

REV. SIR,

ALL the friends of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments inſiſt upon the right of the civil magiſtrate to uſe his own beſt judgment, in chuſing the religion that ſhall be ſupported at the expence of the ſtate, eſpecially if the majority of the people ſhould be of the ſame opinion with him. In Ireland, no regard is paid to this latter circumſtance. For there the members of the eſtabliſhed church, which takes the tythes of the whole kingdom, are, I believe, computed at little more than one tenth of the people. This, in my opinion, is the moſt bare-faced tyranny. You, however, have mentioned one circumſtance, which may ſerve to ſhew how little ſtreſs you can ſometimes lay on the ſentiments either of the civil governors, or the majority of the people. For you ſay, p. 14, "Athanaſius once ſtood ſingle againſt the "world, and prevailed." His opinion, therefore, was not, by your own confeſſion, either that of the generality of the people, or that of the governing powers. You therefore muſt think that,

a very

a very ſmall minority may be in the right, and finally prevail againſt *numbers* and *power* combined. In the time of Conſtantius, you muſt acknowledge that Arianiſm, or unitarianiſm, was the general opinion. And by what means was it that Athanaſianiſm became prevalent? Can you reflect upon the hiſtory of thoſe times, and think that it would ever have become ſo, if it had not been for the ſupport it afterwards had from the governing powers? It has the ſame ſupport at this day. But even this will not be able to preſerve it much longer. You ſee how it loſes ground in America, ſince it has loſt the countenance of government there.

2. You ſay, p. 40, Note, "I do not ſee my Saviour only in a few detached paſſages of either "Teſtament. I ſee him conducting the œconomy of the divine diſpenſations through both, "from the creation to the conſummation of all "things, as the דבר יהוה, the מלאך יהוה, the ο λογος της θεος. Dr. Allix, and Mr. Taylor have both demonſtrated this point. It is only to be wiſhed the "latter had drawn the concluſion drawn by the "former—the juſt and proper concluſion—that "the perſon ſpoken of muſt indeed be VERY "GOD."

Upon this ſubject, Sir, I would earneſtly recommend to you, what I dare ſay, you have never yet

perused, viz. the account which the learned Basnage (in his truly excellent *History of the Jews*) has given of their sentiments with respect to the Messiah, and Mr. Lindsey's reply to Mr. Taylor, in the *Sequel to his Apology*. This, I think, it is barely possible to read, without being convinced that there is no weight whatever in any thing that is alleged by Mr. Taylor. You consider it as the clearest of all truths, that Christ was the person by whom God spake to Moses and the prophets. But indeed, Sir, this notion is directly contrary to what is asserted in the first verse of the epistle to the Hebrews, in which we read, *God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the Fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his son.* What can be more evident from this, than that God spake to mankind by his son only *in the last days*, or the times of the gospel, and not in any former period of time? Yet you say that Socinians put forced and unnatural constructions on the language of scripture.

I heartily join with you, Sir, in your exhortation to excite the zeal of the learned members of your church, in the defence of its peculiar doctrines, and also to interest the *common people* in this controversy. With respect to every argument of importance, these are as capable of judging as we can pretend to be. Let the twenty thousand copies of the pamphlet recommended

commended by you, p. 20, be immediately printed and diſperſed. I fear not the conſequence. It was, I find, one of the many pieces that were written to counteract the effect of one of my own, entitled, *An Appeal to the ſerious Profeſſors of Chriſtianity*, many of which have been diſperſed, and with a ſucceſs far exceeding my expectations from it. A like advantage to what I think to be the cauſe of truth, has reſulted from the publication of another ſmall piece, entitled, *A general View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and againſt the Divinity or Pre-exiſtence of Chriſt, from Reaſon, from the Scriptures, and from Hiſtory.*

My principal expectations, however, are from the ingenuous *youth*, whoſe prejudices are not ſo rivetted as thoſe of perſons more advanced in life; and for this reaſon I ſhall take the liberty to addreſs a few letters to thoſe young men in the two univerſities, who are intended for the ſervice of the church. They will, of courſe, read your publications, and I hope they will do me, or rather themſelves, and the cauſe of truth, the juſtice to read both ſides.

You are pleaſed to ſay of my conduct, in one reſpect, p. 12, "It is fair, it is manly, it is noble, "it is kind." Be aſſured, Sir, you ſhall never find it otherwiſe. And be this controverſy of longer or ſhorter continuance, I ſhall be mindful of the advice you give to your friends, p. 9, "that

"it be conducted in an honourable way, accord-"ing to the laws of war." In this respect, I have uniformly observed one rule, which you, Sir, as well as most of my antagonists, have neglected; which is to send a copy of my tracts to every person who is particularly noticed in them. This has always appeared to me to be fair and proper; and I wish that, for the future, it may be considered as indispensable in these literary contests.

Having nothing farther, of much consequence, to address to yourself in particular, I conclude with once more assuring you, that I think myself singularly happy in having found so learned and candid an antagonist, and waiting your own time (reminding you, however, of my own motto *Ars longa, Vita brevis*) for the appearance of your large work, I subscribe myself, with the greatest respect,

Rev. Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM,
MARCH 1, 1787.

# LETTERS

TO THE

# YOUNG MEN,

WHO ARE IN A

Courſe of Education for the Chriſtian Miniſtry,

AT THE

Univerſities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Multa ferunt anni venientes commoda ſecum,
Multa recedentes adimunt.

HORACE.

# LETTERS

TO THE

# YOUNG MEN, &c.

## LETTER I.

*Of Subſcription to Articles of Faith.*

GENTLEMEN,

EXCUSE the addreſs of a ſtranger, whoſe apology for it is an earneſt deſire of contributing what may be in his power to your forming a right judgment concerning ſome ſubjects, which it imports you to underſtand, and of giving you ſuch repreſentations of things as you are not ſo likely to receive from any other quarter. In many things, no doubt, your profeſſors and tutors, are much better qualified to give you inſtruction, than I can pretend to be; and with reſpect to theſe, I am very willing to ſubmit to their ſuperiority, and to yours. But with reſpect to ſome other things, you may eaſily imagine, that they may

may not have been in the way of having their own attention called to them ſo much as mine has been; and therefore, with the beſt intentions in the world, in the diſcharge of their duty to you, they will naturally be leſs explicit in their inſtructions. It is in no other caſe that I would preſume to ſolicit your attention. To your own good ſenſe, and candour, I therefore entirely refer myſelf. If by reading this addreſs you ſhould ſee any thing in a new and juſter light than you have hitherto done, my end will be anſwered; and if not, it will not be much of your time that will be loſt upon it. My own time I cannot better employ, than in making the attempt.

As thoſe who are deſigned to teach the principles of the chriſtian religion to the reſt of the community, I conſider you as deſtined to fill a ſtation of the greateſt honour and importance in your country; and I wiſh you to be truly ſenſible of the honour and importance of it; not to make you proud of the rank it will give you, but to inſpire you with an earneſt deſire, and a laudable ambition, to diſcharge the duties of it in the beſt manner. For in this caſe only, does any man either receive honour from his ſtation, or do honour to it.

In order to teach religion with advantage to others, you will agree with me that it ought to be well underſtood by yourſelves; and we cannot

expect to underſtand any thing of this conſequence, without giving proper *time* to the ſtudy of it. Articles of faith are things of moment, and therefore we ſhould not form a haſty judgment concerning them, but deliberately weigh before we decide. And in this reſpect it is that I muſt take the liberty to requeſt you ſeriouſly to conſider the propriety of your preſent cuſtoms, as you are required to ſubſcribe to what it cannot be ſuppoſed you have had ſufficient time to *ſtudy*, and therefore cannot be ſuppoſed to *underſtand*.

Such a cuſtom ſuited perfectly well with the times of darkneſs and bigotry, in which it was eſtabliſhed. The great object then was the public profeſſion of the ſame faith, which it was thought could not be ſecured too early; and the extinction of all ſchiſm, which it was thought could not be too carefully guarded againſt; and not *ſolid inſtruction*, and a well grounded knowledge of what was profeſſed. This could not have been gained without previous *enquiry*, and diſcuſſion, in which there would have been ſome hazard of perſons forming different judgments; and then the favourite article of the *unity of the catholic church* would have been in danger of being broken.

But, happily, we now ſee things in a very different light. We refuſe to receive the principles of *philoſophy*, and certainly ſhould not receive thoſe of *religion*, without being ſatisfied, from proper evidence,

evidence, with reſpect to their truth. Whatever uſe there may be in *union*, there cannot be any in *ignorance*, or in an agreement in words without an agreement in ideas. And it is in vain for perſons to pretend to an agreement in judgment, when none of them have formed any proper *judgment* in the caſe, having made no previous *enquiry*, on which alone ſuch a judgment can be formed. Two blind men may agree in their evidence with reſpect to the colour of an object, but would any jury be influenced by ſuch evidence? And no better than this is the agreement of men in articles of faith, concerning the truth of which they have made no enquiry.

Perſons can then only be properly ſaid to think alike, when they ſee things in the ſame light, and when the ſame arguments have the ſame weight with them. But in order to this, there muſt be a previous clear perception of the *ſubject* concerning which a judgment is to be formed, and an equally clear perception of the nature and force of the *evidence* on which it is formed. Alſo the more important any ſubject is, the greater care ſhould we take to form a right judgment concerning it. Since, therefore, *religion* is of all ſubjects the moſt important, it behoves us to take the greateſt *care*, and conſequently to employ the moſt *time*, in inveſtigating the principles of it.

By

By no means, then, ever declare your aſſent to any articles of faith (and the moſt ſolemn of all declarations is the mode of ſubſcription) before you have carefully conſidered what each of thoſe articles is, and have really ſatisfied yourſelves that you ſee the evidence on which the truth of them is founded. If the ſubſcription be tendered to you before that proceſs has commenced, or before it can have been completed, reſolutely decline it. It becomes every honeſt man ſo to do: becauſe otherwiſe he ſigns he knows not what; though he virtually ſays that he has *conſidered* what he has done, and is ſatisfied with reſpect to the propriety of it. If you would not ſet your hand to a common bond, without previouſly reading it, and approving of it, ſurely your minds ought to revolt at the idea of ſubſcribing articles of faith which you have not examined. And yet ſome, I fear, do this without having ſo much as read them, or being able to ſay what propoſitions they have ſigned their aſſent to.

The probability is, that the greater part of you, who will ever think of reading this addreſs, have already ſubſcribed the articles of the church of England; having done it at your matriculation, that is, on your admiſſion to that place of education in which you were to ſtudy them, than which nothing more prepoſterous can well be imagined. In this caſe, as perſons who have unintentionally done wrong, proceed no farther, and do

do not, by availing yourſelves of any advantages accruing from it, make that to be a deliberate falſehood, which originally was nothing more than an overſight. Truth and uprightneſs require that you renounce your ſubſcription, and every thing conſequent upon it. Becauſe, till you be ſatisfied that what you have ſubſcribed is true, ſo that you could *bona fide* repeat the ſubſcription, you ought to conſider yourſelves as not having ſubſcribed at all.

I take it for granted, you will not think that *religion* is the only ſubject with reſpect to which a perſon may be lawfully guilty of a known falſehood, or prevarication; or that God, in whoſe preſence the ſubſcription is made, is the only Being who may be ſafely mocked and trifled with. What can you hereafter ſay to any man, who ſhall have made a falſe declaration of any other kind, or have taken a falſe oath, when you will be conſcious to yourſelves that you have made a declaration in which there was as little ſincerity, and that you made a ſolemn profeſſion of what you did not know to be true, or might have known to be falſe; and that you reap the benefit of ſuch falſe declaration and profeſſion?

This, Gentlemen, is a caſe that will not bear arguing. Every upright mind muſt decide upon it immediately, and all the attempts that have been made to apologize for ſubſcription to arti-

cles

cles of faith that are not really believed, or, which is the ſame thing, have never been examined, or for holding the poſſeſſion of any thing to which ſuch a ſubſcription introduced a man, can only expoſe the chicanery of thoſe who have recourſe to them. In any other caſe ſimilar to this, every clergyman would ſay with David, *As the Lord liveth, ſuch a thing ought not to be.* But how many of them are there, to whom, after ſuch a declaration, it might be ſaid, *Thou art the man?*

This is certainly the caſe with all Arians and Socinians in the church of England, of all who admit the principles of *Dr. Clarke's Treatiſe on the Trinity*, or any other, in which the Son of God is maintained to be, in any ſenſe, inferior to the Father, or to be no proper object of prayer. For in one of your creeds it is expreſsly ſaid, *that of the three perſons in the trinity, no one of them is before or after the other, &c.* and in your litany petitions are addreſſed to God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, as well as to God the Father.

With the greateſt reſpect, I am,

Gentlemen,

Your ſincere well-wiſher,

J. PRIESTLEY.

## LETTER II.

*Of the Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity.*

GENTLEMEN,

THOUGH I do not mean to trouble you with my thoughts on many articles of your chriſtian faith, there is *one* which, on account of its peculiar magnitude, I cannot help recommending to your moſt deliberate conſideration, viz. *the object of religious worſhip*. From the nature of the thing, you cannot but be ſenſible, that *this* muſt be an article of the firſt and laſt importance; and therefore on this ſubject you certainly ought not to form a haſty or raſh judgment, but bring to the ſtudy of it your beſt faculties, and give it your cloſeſt attention.

In a matter of this conſequence, let no man, or body of men, judge for you, but honeſtly and fairly judge for yourſelves; becauſe you are individually reſponſible for the uſe that you make of your faculties. Conſider that, on the very ſame principle on which any perſon in this country may imagine that he may ſafely acquieſce in the judgment of the church of England, a perſon in France or Italy will be juſtified in acquieſcing in the judgment of the church of Rome, and may

receive without examination the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, or the worſhip of Mary and all the Saints.

If you are ſenſible that they ought not to bow down and worſhip Mary, on the authority of the church of Rome, neither ought you to worſhip the Son of Mary, on the authority of the church of England, but ſhould firſt ſatisfy yourſelves, whether the ſon of Mary be your God and maker. If he himſelf have a *God and Father*, and the ſame God and Father with yourſelves, you are brethren; and you ought no more, without an expreſs divine authority for it, to worſhip him, than he ought to worſhip you. You are equally dependent upon the ſame great God and Father of all; and neither of you have any thing but what he gave, what you are alike accountable to him for, and what he can reſume at his ſovereign pleaſure.

But I do not mean, in this addreſs, to enter into the particulars of the argument with you, but only to exhort you, though with all poſſible earneſtneſs, to enquire and judge for yourſelves. And do not think yourſelves unqualified to form a judgment in the caſe. As far as *reaſon* is concerned in the diſcuſſion, uſe your reaſon; where *ſcripture* is appealed to, conſult the ſcriptures; and when recourſe muſt be had to *antiquity*, carefully read the monuments of it, eſpecially in the

writings of thoſe who are uſually called *the Fathers*, ſo ſtrongly recommended to you by the Dean of Canterbury; and for this you enjoy uncommon advantages, in the noble libraries to which you have acceſs. We diſſenters have no ſuch privileges. All the knowledge we get of this kind is the reſult of much trouble, and much expence.

If, not wholly relying on your own inveſtigation, you have recourſe to the aſſiſtance of others, read the publications on both ſides of the queſtion, and pay no regard to the authority of *names*, but only to the weight of *argument*.

The Dean of Canterbury, I am ſorry to perceive, has only recommended ſuch works as were profeſſedly written in defence of the doctrine of the trinity, which is not of a piece with his uſual candour and liberality. Very different from this, and certainly more worthy of a chriſtian and proteſtant biſhop, is the conduct of the preſent excellent biſhop of Llandaff; who, in the *liſt of books* which he recommends to the ſtudents in divinity, has inſerted works written for and againſt every doctrine of importance.

As this great queſtion is now in the courſe of public diſcuſſion, between myſelf and the ableſt writers of your own church, and you cannot be wholly unconcerned ſpectators, read the productions

tions of both. You may be well aſſured that, conſidering the ability of the writers in favour of the doctrine of the trinity, their number, and the zeal with which they enter into the controverſy, together with the opportunities which they and their numerous friends (who will not fail to give them all the aſſiſtance in their power) have of conſulting the moſt valuable libraries, every thing will be produced that can be favourable to their argument. If, therefore, it be poſſible to prove that the doctrine of the trinity is not contrary to reaſon, that it is agreeable to the ſcriptures, and that it has the countenance of primitive antiquity, it will be done.

But if, after all that can be alleged, you cannot help thinking that *three divine perſons* muſt be *three Gods*, which our religion reprobates; that Chriſt is the meſſenger and ſervant of God, and not God himſelf; and that the great body of common chriſtians in primitive times (the very perſons for whoſe uſe the books of the New Teſtament were written, and who muſt have underſtood them, and the doctrine of the apoſtles, from whom they had their inſtruction) were unitarians, believing that divinity is to be aſcribed to no other than to one God the Father, and that Chriſt was ſimply (Luke xxiv. 19.) *a prophet mighty in word and deed* (Acts ii. 22.) *a man approved of God, by ſigns, wonders, and mighty deeds, which God did by*

*him*; you muſt conclude that, notwithſtanding the ability, learning, and integrity, of my opponents, their cauſe is indefenſible; that the reformed church of England is idolatrous, as well as the church of Rome; and therefore that, till ſhe be farther reformed, you ought to *come out of her, and be ſeparate.*

You will, of courſe, hear many ſermons, and ſee many treatiſes, againſt my publications in defence of the divine unity, but do me the juſtice to read the books and tracts which have alarmed your ſuperiors ſo much. You will find them written perhaps with leſs ability, and leſs learning, than thoſe of my antagoniſts, but with a ſincere *love of truth.* While the controverſy continues, I pledge myſelf to acknowledge any overſight that, in ſo copious an argument, I may be guilty of, and ſhall let nothing of any moment paſs unnoticed. I am even willing to adopt any method that ſhall be thought, by my adverſaries themſelves, moſt to facilitate the fulleſt inveſtigation of the ſubject. I openly call upon every one, who has any conſiderable character at ſtake, and who has entered into the liſts, ſuch as Dr. Horſley, Mr. White, Mr. Howes, and Dr. Horne, to make good what they have advanced; and in theſe circumſtances, you cannot doubt their readineſs to produce any thing in their power to confute and ſilence me.

Beſides

Beſides my larger works, as the *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*, and of *Early Opinions concerning Jeſus Chriſt*, together with all the writings of Mr. Lindſey, permit me to recommend to your peruſal, a ſmall pamphlet entitled, *A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, &c.* mentioned p. 39. You will find it of great uſe in eſtimating the progreſs that may be made in the diſcuſſion, as it takes in the whole compaſs of it, from reaſon, from the ſcriptures, and from hiſtory; ſo that if any of my arguments be found to be defective, you will eaſily ſee how many remain unanſwered, and what is their proper place, and weight, in the whole controverſy.

I am, &c.

## LETTER III.

*Of the Difficulties attending an open Acknowledgment of Truth.*

GENTLEMEN,

I Am truly ſenſible of the peculiar difficulties attending your ſituation. Many of you, I believe, have no other proſpect in life but that of officiating in a church, in which the doctrine of the trinity, to the examination of which I wiſh to draw your attention, is actually received. It even enters into her forms of devotion; ſo that for the preſent you have no choice but to ſubſcribe her articles, and make uſe of her forms, or give up all hopes of preferment, or employment. Should you, therefore, after the examination which I now recommend, ſee reaſon (as I cannot help ſuſpecting you will) to decline that ſubſcription, and all your proſpects in life depending upon it, you may be much embarraſſed.

To this I can only ſay, that, great as the difficulty, no doubt, will be, it will be leſs *now*, than if, venturing to take a ſtep which your minds diſapprove, you ſhould be ſtruck with a ſenſe of the impropriety

priety of this tranſaction, in a later period of your lives; when you will be actually engaged in an employment, the duties of which you cannot conſcientiouſly diſcharge, with the additional burden of a wife and family, and when it may be too late to look out for any other ſource of ſubſiſtence. Many worthy perſons, I do aſſure you, are at this very time in this moſt painful ſituation, wiſhing it was with them as it is now with you; who clearly ſee what *duty* requires, and acutely feel how *nature*, and all its ties, oppoſe it.

Some years ago, a clergyman, then turned ſixty, with a wife and a numerous family, told me his diſtreſſing caſe, with tears literally running down his cheeks. It was not for me to adviſe what I might not have been capable of doing in the ſame circumſtances. He himſelf knew but too well what ſtrict duty required. I could only mix my tears with his. For ſuch men as theſe, whoſe complaints are only uttered in private, our preſent governors and their own eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors, ſeem to have no feeling. But there is a great Being, *higher than the higheſt*, who knows, and who will one day viſit for theſe things.

Strongly as you may feel your own difficulties, you cannot but be ſenſible how much they are exceeded by thoſe of the caſe which I have now mentioned. Beſides, if virtuous reſolution is to be expected of man, it is to be expected of *youth*.

That

That is the period of life the moſt diſtinguiſhed for a generous ardour in the purſuit of truth, for an ingenuous diſpoſition, unperverted by a commerce with the world, and a vigour of mind equal to any trial. Act, then, a part becoming enlightened, virtuous, and generous Britiſh youth. Confer together, and aſſociate in your common cauſe. A petition for a removal of ſubſcription to any human articles of faith, and for a reformation of the public liturgy, or for leave to alter it with the conſent of your pariſhioners, would, I am confident, have more weight from you, than from any other deſcription of men in the kingdom.

Tell our governors, that you are ready to render your country the beſt ſervices in your power, in promoting the knowledge and practice of chriſtianity; but that there are obſtructions in your way, which prevent your engaging in this great work, and which would defeat your purpoſe if you did; that you cannot, with a good grace, or with effect, inculcate the principles of honeſty and integrity on others, after, by a public and ſolemn act, violating them yourſelves; that it will be your happineſs, and your glory, to teach chriſtianity, but not the manifeſt abuſes and corruptions of it, doctrines which militate with the fundamental principles of it; that you cannot, at the ſame time preach the religion of Chriſt, and worſhip another Being than him whom Chriſt worſhipped,

ſhipped, and whom he taught all his diſciples to worſhip, as *the only true God*.

Tell them that, after an alteration in the forms of public worſhip, you can with infinitely more advantage teach thoſe principles which are truly great, and eſſential to chriſtianity, and on which alone its efficacy to purify the heart, and to reform the life, can depend; and that, provided this great end be gained, the object of all good and wiſe government will be anſwered; for that the welfare of ſociety, which is the ſole object of civil government, cannot poſſibly have any neceſſary connexion with the myſterious doctrine of the trinity. Tell them that it is ſufficient if, believing nothing but what they can underſtand, men be good citizens, and that this will be beſt effected by inculcating the great doctrine of a life of retribution after death, a ſtate in which men will receive according to their *works*, not according to their *opinions*.

If you cannot engage a ſufficient number to make a reſpectable application to your ſuperiors, in church or ſtate, ſtill do what integrity requires of you as individuals. It is what many, to their infinite honour, have done before you. A conſiderable number of the moſt intelligent and beſt diſpoſed young men have declined entering into the miniſtry, when they ſeriouſly reflected on the terms on which they muſt have done it, men,

men, whoſe ability and integrity would have qualified them to be the greateſt ornaments of their profeſſion, if the entrance into it had not been too narrow to admit them.

I cannot help flattering myſelf, however, that an earneſt repreſentation from even a few of you, of your peculiarly difficult ſituation, would not be without its effect; and then your country would be indebted to you for its emancipation from a bondage which, in conſequence of the progreſs of religious knowledge, muſt be every day more ſeverely felt, a bondage which cannot affect any but the intelligent, and the ingenuous; thoſe who wiſh well to the cauſe of *virtue*, but who cannot promote it except in the way of *truth*. In all events, however, you will have done your duty; and greater guilt will remain on thoſe who refuſe ſo reaſonable a requeſt.

Where religion is concerned, do not deceive yourſelves by waiting till ſome *great man*, in the church, or the ſtate, take the lead. Neither was chriſtianity propagated, nor the reformation begun, by this means. Individuals of all ranks thought and acted for themſelves, and thoſe who had influence in public meaſures favoured them when it appeared to be their intereſt ſo to do. And, in the nature of things, nothing elſe could be expected. Perſons in years, or who have eſtabliſhments for life, have generally hit upon ſome method

method or other to make themſelves eaſy; and wiſhing to continue ſo, they are offended at any thing that is likely to create diſturbance. Thus diſpoſed, they will never be at a loſs for ſome plauſible pretext for *putting off*, at leaſt, every propoſal of reformation. There are, however, ſuch liberal characters on the epiſcopal bench at this time, that I almoſt perſuade myſelf, they would countenance and aſſiſt ſuch an application as I propoſe.

As to miniſters of ſtate, they muſt, and ought, to follow the lead of the people. Make it appear to them that the country in general wiſhes for a reformation, or that many earneſtly deſire it, and that the reſt would not violently oppoſe it, and depend upon it, *they* will not. It is our buſineſs, therefore, without troubling ourſelves about the conduct of others, to look to our own, to get all the light we can ourſelves, and to do every thing in our power to enlighten the minds of others; confident that the general prevalence of truth will, in due time, draw after it every thing that we can deſire, with reſpect to *public reformation*, and *public liberty*.

With reſpect to the *common people* of this country, it would be doing them great injuſtice to conſider them as trinitarians. More than nine in ten, I am pretty confident, would be better pleaſed with an unitarian than a trinitarian liturgy, though they

they do not intereſt themſelves ſo much in the affair, as to take any ſteps towards promoting it.

There can even be no doubt, but that the thinking part of the clergy, really wiſh for ſome alteration in the articles, and the form of public worſhip, and that they would prefer one in which all religious worſhip ſhould be confined to *one God, the Father*, could they be ſure that every thing elſe relating to the eſtabliſhment might remain unaltered. Of the learned clergy, it is almoſt certain that thoſe who approve of the ſentiments of Dr. Clarke, are more in number than the rigid trinitarians, who would be clamorous againſt any change. Were the younger clergy, therefore, and candidates for the miniſtry, in earneſt, for a reformation, it could not, in all probability, be kept back much longer.

I am, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER IV.

*Animadverſions on Dr. Purkis's Sermon.*

GENTLEMEN,

THE preceding Letters were written in conſequence of reading the Dean of Canterbury's truly candid Sermons, and I was led to think of addreſſing myſelf to *you*, as well as to *him* on the occaſion, on account of his being preſident of a college in Oxford. Since the writing of them, I have ſeen another *Sermon* preached by Dr. Purkis, one of the preachers of the King's Chapel, at Whitehall, before the Univerſity of Cambridge, on Commencement Sunday, July 2, 1786, which, if the writer may be credited *, was received with

* The doubt here intimated was occaſioned by the following anonymous letter, which ſhows that one of our Univerſities, at leaſt, is not deſtitute of liberality.

"I loſe no time in tranſmitting to you a diſcourſe which did much violence to my feelings at the time I heard it delivered, from the univerſity pulpit. So far is the author's boaſt in the advertiſement from being true, that I believe his ſermon gave ſerious concern to ſeveral very reſpectable, learned, and liberal men among his audience, which, it being Commencement Sunday, was a very numerous one, as well as to myſelf. It was preached as an exerciſe for his doctor's degree. The publiſher informs me, that the greateſt part of the impreſſion has been ſent by

as much applauſe as thoſe of the Dean of Canterbury, who is of Oxford.

Though I think ſuch mere declamation utterly unworthy of an univerſity that has a Newton to boaſt of, and do not ſee that it contains any thing particularly deſerving of a reply, I ſhall take occaſion from it to ſhew the extreme weakneſs of ſome things on which great ſtreſs is laid with reſpect to the diſcuſſion that is now before the public, and others of a ſimilar nature. One would think, indeed, that ſuch things could only be ſaid *ad captandum vulgus*, and could never have been addreſſed to thoſe who are brought up in a freedom from vulgar prejudices, which ought to be one great object in a courſe of *liberal education.*

1. *Of the Influence of Philoſophy on Religion.*

Dr. Purkis preaches from Coll. ii. 8. *Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy, and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudi-*

by the author as preſents to biſhops and great men. I truſt you will not be wanting to check the *poiſon* of its influence, to ſpeak like the author, for which I bluſh, as I ſhould at any thing that ſavoured of an unchriſtian ſpirit. An anſwer from your maſterly pen, I have reaſon to believe, will give great ſatisfaction to many conſcientious lovers of truth in this univerſity, but I aſſure you, to none more than to your hearty well-wiſher in the goſpel cauſe, who profeſſes *ex animo* to be a ſincere enquirer into the *truth as it is in Jeſus.*"

"Cambridge, Nov. 27, 1786."

*ments*

*ments of this world, and not after Chriſt.* By this he, no doubt, meant to inſinuate that myſelf, and other unitarians, who have ſome pretenſions to philoſophy, are juſt ſuch philoſophers as the apoſtle Paul had to do with, their principles being the ſame, having the ſame connexion with religion, the ſame influence upon it, and tending alike to fill the mind with pride and ſelf-conceit. Hence the phraſes, "a minute mind buſied with remarking "only the track of its own experiments," p. 9, "a vain preſuming perſon," ib. "dogmatical ar- "rogance," p. 8, &c. &c. Indeed, without this conſtruction, Dr. Purkis's text and diſcourſe could not be thought to be peculiarly "ſeaſonable *at* "*this time*," as the advertiſement prefixed to it expreſſes.

Now really, Gentlemen, there is no foundation whatever for any of theſe inſinuations or reflections. The philoſophy which the apoſtle alluded to was undoubtedly that of the Gnoſtics, the principles of which you will ſee detailed in my *Hiſtory of early opinions concerning Jeſus Chriſt*, and which you may find in any book of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory. Pleaſe then to examine them, and ſee whether you can find in them any reſemblance to the modern *experimental philoſophy*, with which (notwithſtanding its ſuppoſed evil tendency) you are, I doubt not, well acquainted. The Gnoſtics made no experiments at all. Their notions were all metaphyſical, mythological, or theological, and

therefore, naturally interfered with, and contaminated, the chriſtian principles; whereas, experimental philoſophy is wholly unconnected with them, any farther than as all truth has a connexion.

Accordingly we ſee that there have been experimental philoſophers, as well as mathematicians, of every opinion with reſpect to the doctrine of the trinity. If, therefore, this kind of ſcience tends to make men *proud*, there muſt be proud and conceited trinitarians, as well as unitarians, and there are who think that my antagoniſt Dr. Horſley might be quoted as a proof of this. But, in fact, experimental philoſophy tends to make us humble; as it ſhews in the ſtrongeſt light, the immenſity of nature, the unſearchable wiſdom of the author of nature, and the narrowneſs of our comprehenſion. Other perſons *hear* of theſe truths, but experimental philoſophers *feel* them; and it is chiefly from their report that others derive their knowledge of them. Let Dr. Purkis alſo ſay, what experimental philoſophy has to do with the *traditions of men*, or the *rudiments of the world*.—Indeed, Gentlemen, no man could know any thing of modern philoſophy, or of gnoſticiſm, and ſay what Dr. Purkis does on this ſubject. It is all groundleſs inſinuation, and calumny, void of all colour or reſemblance of truth, and calculated to prejudice the mind both againſt philoſophy, and rational theology.

There

There is more pride, Gentlemen, in disclaiming reason, and affecting to be governed by a principle superior to it, than in humbly following it. Besides it has been well observed, that no man abandons reason till reason has abandoned him.

## 2. *Of Mysteries in Religion.*

If *mysteries* mean, as Dr. Purkis say they do, p. 10, "things in their own nature incomprehen-"sible," I must say that the scriptures know no such mysteries, but only things that were for some time unknown, but which were perfectly intelligible when they were made known. The term is never applied to any thing concerning *the nature of God*, but only to the dispensations of his providence, and almost wholly to that one particular in his dispensations, the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, without burdening them with the observance of the Jewish ritual. But how can this be said to be a thing "in its own nature incomprehensible?" It had been, as the apostle calls it, a *secret*, or *mystery, hid from ages*, but it was then *made known*, and when made known, was perfectly intelligible.

What Paul calls (1 Tim. iii. 16) *the great mystery of godliness* consisted of such particulars relating to christianity as are all perfectly intelligible, when made known, as (even admitting the common reading) *God manifest in the flesh*, that is, speaking to mankind by the man Christ Jesus, &c. &c. Suf-

fer not your minds, therefore, to be dazzled by the doctrine of myſteries in religion, and the ſubmiſſion of *reaſon* to *faith*. By the ſame bait you may be drawn in to believe the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. For the catholics uſe the very ſame arguments in its defence, that the trinitarians do in the defence of that of the trinity. They are both ſaid to be doctrines of *pure revelation*, and that it is not the province of *reaſon* to examine them. In reality, they are neither agreeable to reaſon nor revelation.

### 3. *Of Toleration.*

If any ſubject had been well underſtood, I ſhould have thought it had been that of toleration. But I perceive it is of very difficult comprehenſion to thoſe who have it in their power to be intolerant. It happens to be unfaſhionable to deny the doctrine of it *in words*, but its *principles* are certainly undermined by the limitations of it in this Sermon of Dr. Purkis. For he would not tolerate, p. 20, "the diſbelievers of the goſpel," ſaying, p. 21, that "the religion of Jeſus manifeſtly excludes "every other; and that we muſt adhere to this "excluſive principle, if we aſſert its divine au- "thority."

This, Gentlemen, you muſt ſee to be the moſt palpable of all fallacies. In one ſenſe, indeed, every truth is *excluſive*, becauſe it cannot be received

ceived together with the oppoſite error, the one neceſſarily excluding the other, that is, in the mind of the ſame perſon. But in no other ſenſe is the religion of Chriſt, any more than the principles of true philoſophy, of an excluſive nature. Whereas Dr. Purkis means, that the profeſſors of chriſtianity, ought not to ſuffer any other religion to be profeſſed, if they have power to prevent it, which is a doctrine that neither Chriſt nor the apoſtles give any countenance to. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but ſpiritual* (2 Cor. x. 4). If chriſtianity itſelf be of this excluſive nature, the ſame property muſt belong to every thing that is eſſential to it; and conſequently, trinitarians, thinking their peculiar doctrines eſſential to chriſtianity, will think themſelves juſtified in exterminating all unitarians, as well as Jews and Mahometans, as *diſbelievers* of true chriſtianity.

But muſt not Dr. Purkis allow that, if the civil governors of a country, *as ſuch*, have a right to uſe their power in ſupport of what they deem to be true religion, heathens and Mahometans have the ſame right to perſecute chriſtians, that chriſtians have to perſecute them? The chriſtian maxim of *doing to others as we would be done by ourſelves*, is as juſtly applicable to this caſe as to any other whatever. If therefore we chriſtians would think it right that we ſhould be tolerated

among heathens or Mahometans, we ought to tolerate them among us.

4. *Of perverting the Language of the Scriptures.*

Dr. Purkis says, p. 12, "Next to this turn of "philosophical system in religion, we remarked a "sceptical desire of arguing away the phraseo-"logy of scripture, when it seems to convey doc-"trines above our comprehension, in order to re-"duce them to the level of our own opinions, "&c. &c. &c."

Now I dare say, that Dr. Purkis, believing in the truth of the scriptures, and likewise in other truths not contained in the scriptures, will endeavour to reconcile them as well as he can, as also to reconcile one scripture truth with another; for they cannot *both* be believed, unless they can be reconciled; and what is this but the very thing that he charges the unitarians with, as an unpardonable fault? For example, he, as a protestant cannot believe that a piece of bread is changed into flesh, while the properties of bread remain in it, though our Saviour has said of the sacramental bread, *This is my body*. What then does he do, but explain away this phraseology, by supposing that it is a figurative expression, and merely because the doctrine of "*the literal sense* is above his "comprehension; and to reduce it to the level "of his own opinion." In this very language, he

he would be reproved for his conduct by a catholic disputant. Why then does he see a mote in my eye, and not the beam that is in his own eye?

But in reality, Gentlemen, the plain language of scripture is much more directly in favour of unitarianism than of the doctrine of the trinity; and it is with difficulty made to accord to the latter. The great doctrine of the strict *unity of God*, and also that of the *pure humanity of Christ*, is the common language of the scriptures, where no figure is used, or can be suspected. As when the apostle says (1 Tim. ii. 5) *To us there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*. By what construction of words and phrases, can the doctrine of the trinity be reconciled with this passage? Must not the literal meaning be explained away, before it can be made consistent with that mysterious doctrine?

The texts which the unitarians have to accommodate to their system are very few indeed, compared with those which the trinitarians must subject to their mode of torture.

### 5. *Of Materialism and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity.*

Dr. Purkis is not singular in endeavouring to throw an odium upon myself, and others, as *materialists*, as if the doctrine of an immaterial soul

was eſſential to chriſtianity. I ſhall not argue this matter with Dr. Purkis, having already advanced all that I think neceſſary for the purpoſe in my *Diſquiſitions concerning matter and ſpirit*, in which I am ſatisfied that I have made it as evident as any thing of this nature can be, that the popular doctrine of a ſoul has no foundation in reaſon, or the ſcriptures, but was borrowed from the heathen philoſophy. I ſhall now only obſerve to you, that the doctrine of a ſoul is of no conſequence *in itſelf*, or to *a chriſtian*, but as an argument for a future life.

If, therefore, any perſon does firmly believe that he ſhall live again, and receive according to his works, which is the great and ultimate doctrine of chriſtianity, of what conſequence is it whether he believe that he has a ſoul or not? It is enough that he believes that his power of thinking (which is the only province of a ſoul) will be reſtored to him at the reſurrection, and that he will have a perfect recollection of all the tranſactions of the preſent life. And this I believe as firmly as any of thoſe who hold the doctrine of a ſoul. In what reſpects then, is my faith of leſs value than theirs?

With as little reaſon do Dr. Purkis and others ſuppoſe that, by the doctrine of *philoſophical neceſſity*, which I hold, and which I conſider as even demonſtrably true, " every principle," as he ſays,

p. 7, " of right and wrong, of moral goodneſs " and moral government, has been in reality re- " moved from our ſight, and, of courſe, the ne- " ceſſity of all law and religion whatſoever."

Now, in my writings on this ſubject, I have proved it, and ſhall not take the trouble to prove any more, that the doctrine of neceſſity ſupplies the only theoretical foundation of moral government, and that the oppoſite doctrine affords no foundation for it at all. But independently of this, with reſpect to the real conſequences of any doctrine, thoſe who hold it, and not thoſe who deny it, ſhould be conſulted. For if I myſelf do not perceive that ſuch conſequences flow from my ſyſtem, I cannot *act* as if they did. And ſurely, any man who believes that his actions are truly *voluntary*, depending upon *motives*, and that he ſhall receive good or evil hereafter according to his works here, may be depended upon for giving due attention to his conduct, whatever be his opinion with reſpect to the nature of *the mind*, and the manner in which motives influence it. Can Dr. Purkis ſhew that neceſſarians are at all leſs ſolicitous about their moral conduct than other men? This is the proper teſt of the moral influence of any ſyſtem.

It is commonly ſaid, that the doctrine of neceſſity tends to make men *indifferent to all action*, all events being pre-determined by God, and all ſure to

to work right, and end well. But how does this ſuppoſition correſpond to fact? Dr. Horne ſays, "our opponents," among whom he undoubtedly includes myſelf, "are ſhrewd, active, buſy, and "indefatigable." How far this character applies to myſelf, I will not ſay. But I will venture to aſſert that, change the term *ſhrewd* (which is always uſed in a bad ſenſe) for *intelligent*, or *ſenſible*, and the reſt of the deſcription applies to many neceſſarians, and that ſome of the advocates for philoſophical liberty are the moſt indolent of mankind.

I am, &c.

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## LETTER V.

*Of Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity.*

GENTLEMEN,

AS the worthy Dean of Canterbury ſtrongly recommends to you *Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, proved by above a hundred ſhort and clear arguments, expreſſed in the terms of the holy ſcripture, compared after a manner entirely new*; no doubt eſteeming it to be a maſter-piece of reaſoning, I am tempted to give you a ſpecimen of his mode of arguing on the ſubject. To purſue

ſue him through all his *hundred arguments* will hardly be required of me; as every text on which any thing that *to other perſons* has had the appearance of an argument, has been built, is ſatisfactorily explained in my ſmall pamphlet, entitled, *A Familiar Illuſtration of particular Texts of Scripture*, and more at large in the writings of Mr. Lindſey.

The foundation of the more ſpecious of Mr. Jones's arguments is the following: If any language be applied to God, and the ſame be ever applied to Chriſt; or if the ſame act ſhould be aſcribed to them both, it is with him a proof that Chriſt muſt be God; without conſidering that the ſame language, and the ſame actions, may be aſcribed to God, and alſo to man, in different ſenſes.

Thus, becauſe we read in Iſ. xliii. 11. *I, even I, am the Lord, and beſides me there is no* SAVIOUR; and Chriſt is alſo called *a Saviour* (as in 2 Pet. iii. 18. *our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*) he concludes that Chriſt muſt be God, ſaying, p. 3, "unleſs he were God, even the Lord Jehovah, "as well as man, he could not be *a Saviour*, be- "cauſe the Lord has declared there is no Saviour "beſide himſelf. It is therefore rightly obſerved "by the apoſtle, Phil. ii. 9. that God, in digni- "fying the man Chriſt with the name of *Jeſus*, "has given him a name above every name, even "that of *a Saviour*, which is his own name, and "ſuch as can belong to no other."

But,

But, by the very ſame argument, Moſes, and many other perſons, might be proved to be God, becauſe they are called *ſaviours*, having been made *the means* of delivering the people of Iſrael, or others, from ſome of the difficulties in which they were involved, as in Neh. ix. 27. *Thou gaveſt them Saviours, who ſaved them, &c.* In the ſame ſenſe Chriſt is alſo properly called *a Saviour*, as having been the inſtrument in the hand of God of ſaving mankind from ſin, and from death, the conſequence of ſin; and that Chriſt was no more than the *inſtrument* in the hands of God for this end, is as evident, and as clearly expreſſed in the ſcriptures, as that Moſes was his inſtrument in delivering the people of Iſrael from Egypt. They are both ſaid to be *ſent*, or commiſſioned, by God, for the purpoſe.

On the ſame principle Mr. Jones argues, p. 18, that becauſe we read, John iii. 16. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon*, and Eph. v. 25. *Chriſt alſo loved the church, and gave himſelf for it*, that *Chriſt* and *God* muſt be the ſame. He well obſerves, in his advertiſement, that "his "arguments are, to the beſt of his knowledge, "moſt of them, *new*." Indeed, I ſhould have thought it very extraordinary, if the compariſon of theſe two texts had ſuggeſted the ſame argument to any other individual perſon beſides himſelf; though when ſuggeſted by him, it may have approved itſelf to the better ſenſe of the Dean of Canterbury.

In

In reply to it, it can hardly be neceſſary to inform you, Gentlemen, that God might love the world, and having the power to diſpoſe of Chriſt, as of all his other creatures, as he pleaſed, might *ſend* him, *give* him, or *appoint* him, for the purpoſe of ſaving the world from ignorance and vice, at the ſame time that Chriſt, engaging in this benevolent undertaking with the ſame readineſs and chearfulneſs with which all perſons ought to obey the commands of God; and being a man himſelf, and, as ſuch, having the moſt ſincere goodwill and compaſſion towards his fellow men, might alſo *love* them, and be ſaid to *give himſelf* for them. As Paul likewiſe, and other apoſtles, loved the church, and gave their lives for it, which it is evident they did, whether that particular language be ever uſed with reſpect to them in the ſcriptures or not, Mr. Jones might prove from this circumſtance, that *they* are alſo each of them God, equal to the Father.

Mr. Jones even argues that Chriſt is of a divine nature, becauſe, in 2 Pet. i. 4. chriſtians are ſaid to be *partakers of the divine nature*, and in Heb. iii. 14. they are ſaid to be *partakers of Chriſt*. Therefore, ſays he, p. 29, "Chriſt is in, "or of the divine nature, the ſame Almighty "God and Lord who declared to Abraham, I "am thy ſhield, and exceeding great reward; ſo "that theſe being compared together, are deciſive "for the Catholic Homoouſion doctrine, at which "the

" the Arians, from the Council of Nice to this " very day, have been ſo grievouſly offended."

Mr. Jones was not, perhaps, aware that, by this mode of reaſoning, he was ſupplying the Roman catholics with a new argument for their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. But if every thing of which chriſtians are ſaid to be *partakers* be the ſame, the ſacramental bread muſt be concluded to be Chriſt himſelf. For it is ſaid, 1 Cor. x. 17. *We are all partakers of that one bread.*

On theſe principles alſo, the diſtinction in the three perſons of the trinity will be confounded. For as in Heb. ii. 14. chriſtians are ſaid to be *partakers of Chriſt*; ſo in chap. vi. 4. they are ſaid to be *partakers of the Holy Ghoſt.*

I am ſtill more ſurprized that Mr. Jones ſhould not have perceived that, according to his mode of interpretation, this text in Peter would authorize him to conclude, that all chriſtians have a proper divine nature, or are conſubſtantial with the Father. For in defence of this term, which he acknowledges to be unſcriptural, he ſays, p. 30, addreſſing the Arians, " And now the ſcrip- " ture is before us, let me aſk them a plain queſ- " tion or two. Is not the word *eſſence*, or *ſub-* " *ſtance*, of the ſame ſignification with the word " *nature*? And have not the Fathers of the " church thus expounded it, and is not this phraſe

" *of*

" *of the ſame nature* as concluſive for the divinity " of Chriſt, as that other *of the ſame ſubſtance?* " Why then ſhould that expreſſion of the Nicene " creed be thought ſo offenſive, when there is " another in the ſcripture ſo near of kin to it, " that the Arians muſt be ſenſible that they could " gain nothing by the exchange? For the di- " vine nature, we all agree, can be but one, three " divine natures, of courſe, making three differ- " ent Gods. But the ſcripture, compared as " above, has aſſerted Chriſt to be of this divine " nature."

We ſee here, how much it is in the power of prejudice to make men blind to the moſt obvious conſiderations. For it is remarkable that the participation of a divine nature is no where ſo expreſsly predicated of Chriſt, as it is by Peter, in this paſſage, of *all chriſtians*: whereas, from the above quotation from Mr. Jones, the reader would have imagined that it was not to *chriſtians*, but to *Chriſt* only, that this participation was attributed.

I ſhall conclude my animadverſions on Mr. Jones's medium of proof, that God and Chriſt are the ſame being, by obſerving, that on the very ſame principle *God* and *Satan* may be proved to be the ſame Being; ſince the ſame action is aſcribed to them both. For, in 2 Sam. i. 24. we read, *And again the anger of the Lord was kindled*

*againſt Iſrael, and he moved David againſt them, to ſay, go number Iſrael and Judah*; whereas, in the parallel hiſtory, 1 Chron. xxi. 1. we read, *And Satan ſtood up againſt Iſrael, and provoked David to number Iſrael.*

As to all the texts of ſcripture in which Chriſt is ſpoken of as *a man*, and conſequently inferior to the Father, which are without number, Mr. Jones makes himſelf very eaſy about them, by ſaying, p. 23, that " in the perſon of Chriſt there " is a human ſoul and body, the nature of a man, " which, as it cannot lay claim to what is ſpoken " of Chriſt in unity with the Father, ſo muſt it " receive to its own account whatever ſeems to " degrade and disjoin him from the Father; ſo " that the true catholic faith, which allows him " to be perfect God and perfect man, is never of- " fended, or put to its ſhifts, by any thing the " ſcripture may have ſaid about him in either " capacity." Had it therefore been aſſerted in the moſt expreſs terms, and had it been repeated ever ſo often, that Chriſt was *not God*, it would not have ſtaggered Mr. Jones, or have put him to any ſhift at all; as he would inſtantly have replied, that the meaning was, not that the *whole perſon of Chriſt*, but only *the man*, the inferior part of him, was not God.

Surely every perſon muſt be ſenſible, that this is putting it abſolutely out of our power to make any

any inference whatever from the language of ſcripture, and ſuppoſing that the ſacred writers had recourſe to the moſt unworthy equivocations. For, by the ſame rule, if any thing conſiſts of two parts, whatever is aſſerted as of *the whole* may be underſtood of which ever *part* any perſon pleaſes. Conſequently, it might be truly ſaid of Chriſt, in contradiction to every thing that is moſt expreſsly related of him in the goſpel hiſtory, that he was never born, that he never died, or never roſe from the dead; ſecretly meaning, that none of theſe particulars could with truth be affirmed of his *divine nature*.

When Chriſt, in order to comfort his diſciples under the idea of his departure from them, ſaid that his Father (to whom he was going, and who as God omnipreſent, would be always with them) was *greater than he*, he certainly muſt have intended that he was greater, not than a part of himſelf only, but than his whole ſelf. His meaning was, no doubt, the ſame with that of other pious perſons, who, on being ſeparated from their friends by death, commonly ſay, that they leave them to the care of one who can do more for them than *they* could.

We have an example of the manner in which Mr. Jones applies the principle I have mentioned, in his interpretation of 1 Cor. xi. 3. *the head of Chriſt is God*. "The name *Chriſt*," he ſays, p. 23,

" does here ſtand, as in other places out of num-
" ber, for the man Chriſt. Otherwiſe it muſt
" follow, that as Chriſt is God, God is the head
" of himſelf, which is a contradiction; or that
" one God is the head of another God, which is
" alſo a contradiction." But can you, Gentlemen, think that by *Chriſt*, in this paſſage, the apoſtle did not mean the whole of Chriſt, whatever his nature conſiſted of, and that God is not here ſaid to be the head of, or ſuperior to, every part of that nature? Mr. Jones might juſt as well have affirmed that when, in the former part of the ſame verſe, it is ſaid, *the head of every man is Chriſt*, that by *man*, is to be underſtood, not the whole of man, but only ſome part of him.

As Mr. Jones is obliged to have recourſe to ſuch a miſerable abuſe of language with reſpect to the word *Chriſt*, he makes no leſs free with the term *Father*. For, in his interpretation of 1 Cor. viii. 6. *To us there is but one God, the Father* (a text ſo deciſively in favour of the proper unity of God, in the perſon of the Father only, that there was no other method of evading the force of it) he ſays, p. 21, " One God the Father is here the
" name of *a nature*, under which Chriſt himſelf,
" as God, is alſo comprehended. And the ſame
" may be proved of it in ſeveral other places."
Mr. Jones certainly was not aware of it, but this kind of reaſoning is even ſubverſive of the doctrine of the trinity itſelf. For if the term *Father* compre-

comprehend all the perſons of the trinity, it muſt be ſynonymous to the term *God*, and no proof will remain of the exiſtence of ſuch a perſon as that of the *Father*; ſo that the *trinity* will be reduced to *two perſons*, viz. the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And if his reaſoning from the phraſe *partaking of the divine nature*, be admitted, theſe two will be farther reduced to one, viz. the Son, who will then, indeed, be *the one God over all.*

On this principle alſo we muſt ſuppoſe, that when Chriſt prayed to the Father, as *the one true God*, John xvii. 3. he did not addreſs himſelf to the perſon of the Father, as any common reader would imagine, but to the *divine nature* in general; and therefore that his prayer was as much directed to himſelf, as to the Father. Beſides, if Mr. Jones be ſufficiently authorized to conſider the term *Father* as expreſſive of the *divine nature* in general, why may we not be at liberty to uſe the term *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, in the ſame latitude. And if each of them denote the whole of the divine nature, the unity of God will be completely eſtabliſhed; as we ſhall then have three different names for the ſame thing, which will be what is commonly called *Sabellianiſm*; according to which the Father, who ſent the Son, was himſelf the Son that was ſent, who was born, and who died.

It is ſurely ſufficient to point out theſe ſpecimens of Mr. Jones's book, which contains no-

thing better, to ſhew you what you have to expect from the whole. But I ſincerely join with the Dean of Canterbury in recommending the whole of it to your careful peruſal, thinking ſuch a defence of the doctrine of the trinity to be the beſt refutation of it; ſtrongly exemplifying, as it does, the wretched ſhifts men are reduced to, when their tenets are repugnant to common ſenſe, and contradicted by the plain and uniform language of ſcripture. Mr. Jones ſeems to pride himſelf in having muſtered up "*a hundred argu-*" *ments*, moſt of them *new*;" but he might eaſily have made them a thouſand, and from the manner in which they might be laid down, as likely to be *convincing*. Mr. Jones, however, ſhould conſider, that the ſtrength of an army depends not on the number of ſick and wounded, but only on that of the *effective men* in it.

Since I wrote the preceding Letters to the Dean of Canterbury, I have ſeen the ſmall pamphlet ſo ſtrongly recommended by him. It is entitled, *A Preſervative againſt the Publications diſperſed by modern Socinians, in which the Impiety and Abſurdity of their Principles are clearly ſhewn.* This *Preſervative*, &c. contains little more than vehement exclamation againſt *wolves in ſheep's cloathing, &c.* repreſenting the Socinians in the worſt light, as enemies to the goſpel, to God, and to their country; whoſe doctrines cannot fail to bring the judgments of God upon us all.

As

As a ſpecimen of the ſentiments, and manner, of this piece, I ſhall only ſelect the following paragraph, from p. 16; "I do not know how the wit "of man, when it has got this new religion, can "put it into a creed. You cannot begin in the "common form, I believe, &c. You muſt ſay, "I do not believe—that any thing more than the "religion of human reaſon is neceſſary to pro- "feſſors of chriſtianity. I have no need of faith. "I want not the grace of God. I need not be "called, nor elected, by the divine favour, &c."

"I remember, when I was a country ſchool- "boy, I uſed to hear my companions talk of "raiſing the devil by ſaying the creed backwards. "Such a confeſſion as this we have now before "us ſeems better calculated to anſwer that pur- "poſe, and is certainly fitter for a necromancer, "than a profeſſor of chriſtianity. Yet this is the "favourite object, for the intereſts of which a "clamorous party aſſembled, contributed, peti- "tioned, and blotted tons of paper. For this an "unhappy gentleman" (meaning the excellent Mr. Lindſey) "left his miniſtry in the church of "England, to preach up the God of Mahome- "tans in a chamber, and calls this *confeſſing Chriſt* "*before men*. For this their pamphlets are diſ- "perſed by thouſands, to turn the affections of "the ignorant from the ineſtimable truths of the "goſpel, and inflame their fancies with a ſet of

" opinions, which can only lead them to perdi-
" tion," &c. &c. &c.

Surely, Gentlemen, I do not need to copy any more of ſuch a pamphlet as this, and much leſs to reply to it. What muſt that cauſe be which requires ſuch wretched miſrepreſentation of the principles and conduct of ſerious men, and ſuch indecent and profane drollery to ſupport it. I ſhould not have thought it worth while to notice ſuch publications as either of theſe of Mr. Jones (for this pamphlet is alſo aſcribed to him) had they not been ſo earneſtly recommended by ſo truly reſpectable a writer as the Dean of Canterbury. I am alſo informed that *Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine* was recommended as a work of conſequence to the Univerſity of Oxford by their Profeſſor of Divinity, Dr. Bentham, who preceded Dr. Randolph. I ſeriouſly hope that Dr. Horne himſelf will produce ſomething much ſuperior to the publications he ſo laviſhly commends. If not, this controverſy is already at an end.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your very humble ſervant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

# LETTERS

TO THE

# REV. DR. PRICE.

——— In hac re ſcilicet una
Multum diſſimiles ; at cætera pene gemelli,
Fraternis animis.

HORACE.

# LETTERS

TO THE

## REV. DR. PRICE.

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### LETTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

DEAR FRIEND,

WITHOUT any view to engaging you in a controverſy, which you have expreſſed a fixed reſolution to decline, but merely from the ſatisfaction I feel in addreſſing myſelf to a perſon for whom I entertain the higheſt degree of eſteem, and even veneration, and whoſe candour exceeds that of almoſt every other man, I chuſe to throw a few remarks upon your late *Sermons* into the form of *Letters to yourſelf*. A great part of the ſatisfaction I enjoy in this life, and eſpecially that valuable portion of it, which ariſes from my ardour (if I have any) in the purſuit

purſuit of truth, I owe to my intercourſe with you; an intercourſe, and friendſhip, which has now been of long ſtanding, and which, if it be not my own fault, will never, I am perſuaded, have any conſiderable interruption; but, after being the ſource of much happineſs to me here, will continue to be ſo for ever.

Your diffidence with reſpect to concluſions, which you have formed with the greateſt care, and after the moſt deliberate enquiry, I even think exceſſive; and it is the only thing with reſpect to which, I cannot ſay that I wiſh to reſemble you. For I would not loſe the ſatisfaction that ariſes from a perſuaſion of having found any valuable truth, nor willingly continue longer than is neceſſary, in a ſtate of *doubt*, than which nothing is more painful and diſtreſſing. Whether I have been too precipitate in forming my own judgment, eſpecially with reſpect to the important queſtion that will be the ſubject of theſe Letters, is not for myſelf to determine. The time is faſt approaching, with reſpect to both of us, when all uncertainty about it will be at an end; and when the ſource of our error, on which ever ſide it lies, will be laid open to us; and ſo as perhaps may be of ſome uſe to us in our farther progreſs in the purſuit of truth. In the mean time, the candour you expreſs on the ſubject, cannot but give me the greateſt ſatisfaction. Speaking of the Socinian ſcheme, you ſay, p. 72, "It maintains all that we

"need

" need be anxious about in chriſtianity, and con-
" ſequently the prejudices againſt it have no juſt
" foundation."

With that candour and diffidence which diſtinguiſh all your writings, and to which all your friends are witneſſes in your daily converſation, you ſay, with reſpect to the doctrine concerning the perſon of Chriſt, p. 158, " I can in this in-
" ſtance, as in moſt others, with much more
" confidence ſay what is *not*, than what *is* the
" truth. The Athanaſian and Calviniſtic ſchemes
" of chriſtianity, I reject with ſtrong conviction.
" The Socinian ſcheme alſo, on the two points
" which chiefly diſtinguiſh it, I find myſelf incap-
" able of receiving." Now ſince you cannot ſay that there are more than *three* opinions on the ſubject, and *two* of them are abſolutely inadmiſſible by you, I ſhould think that nothing could prevent you embracing *the third* with the greateſt confidence and ſatisfaction. Such, at leaſt, would be my own feelings in your circumſtances, and ſuch they are with reſpect to the concluſions which I draw from ſimilar premiſes.

Your indifference about making proſelytes is perfectly agreeable to your uſual candour; but this alſo I think exceſſive. " I feel," you ſay, p. 158,
" no diſpoſition to be very anxious about bringing
" you over to my opinion. The rage for proſe-
" lytiſm is one of the curſes of the world. I wiſh

" to make no proſelytes except to candour, and " charity, and honeſt enquiry."

If it be in the power of either precept or example to make ſuch proſelytes as *theſe*, you, Sir, cannot fail to have many; but in this caſe, I muſt think that you exceed the juſt bounds of moderation. Our zeal to make proſelytes ought, certainly, to be in proportion to our ideas of the importance of the truth for which we are advocates; and it is evident that, notwithſtanding your amiable candour with reſpect to us *Socinians*, or as we rather chuſe to call ourſelves *unitarians*, you think our tenets to be of dangerous conſequence if chriſtianity itſelf be of any value. For you ſay, p. 146, " It appears to me that the doctrine of " Chriſt's ſimple humanity, when viewed in con- " nexion with the ſcripture account of his exalta- " tion, implies an inconſiſtency, and improba- " bility, which falls little ſhort of an impoſſibility; " and conſequently that this doctrine not only " renders the ſcriptures unintelligible, but chriſtia- " nity itſelf incredible."

If therefore, chriſtianity, and the belief of it, be of any importance, as no doubt you think them to be, you ought to wiſh, and endeavour, to make proſelytes to that view of it, according to which alone you think it to be credible. I write ſo much as I do in defence of the opinion which you ſo ſtrongly reprobate, becauſe I ſee it in a very different

different light; not indeed as the only view in which chriſtianity is credible (for I was a firm believer in it when I was an Arian, and even when I was an Athanaſian) but as that according to which it is by far the *moſt* credible. I now think the Athanaſian doctrine to imply a direct contradiction, and the Arian hypotheſis to be ſo improbable, as that it muſt greatly impede the reception of chriſtianity, eſpecially with philoſophical unbelievers. I profeſs to write with no other view than to make proſelytes; nor indeed do I ſee that there can be any other rational object in writing at all.

With the greateſt reſpect and affection,

I am, Dear Friend,

Yours ſincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM,
MARCH 1, 1787.

## LETTER II.

*Of the Nature and antecedent Probability of the Arian Hypotheſis, with the Cauſes of Attachment to it.*

DEAR FRIEND,

BEFORE I conſider any of the *arguments* that you have produced in ſupport of your hypotheſis, I muſt take the liberty to conſider what *it is*, and make ſome obſervations reſpecting its *antecedent probability*. For to this muſt correſpond the number and weight of the arguments that are neceſſary to ſupport it. The Arianiſm that you maintain is not that of Dr. Clarke, but of a much lower kind. For you give it as your opinion, p. 95, that "by Chriſt God made this world only, "with its connexions and dependencies. Thoſe "learned men, therefore," you ſay, p. 96, "ſeem "to me to have gone too far, who ſpeak of him as "a being who exiſted before all worlds, and as at "the head of all worlds. This ſeems almoſt as "little warranted by reaſon and ſcripture as the "doctrine which makes him the *one ſupreme*; and "it makes the doctrine of his having humbled "himſelf to death, even the death of the croſs, to "ſave this world, almoſt equally incredible."

But

But whether we attend to the *words of ſcripture*, which lead you to conclude that Chriſt made *this world*, or whether we attend to the neceſſary *connexions* and *dependencies* of this world, which you juſtly ſuppoſe to have had the ſame maker with it, it appears to me that we cannot help concluding that, if Chriſt made this world, he muſt alſo have made the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and conſequently all worlds. For the apoſtle ſays (Col. i. 16) *by him were* ALL *things created, viſible and inviſible*, and certainly there are not more *conſpicuous* objects in nature than the ſun, moon, and ſtars. If, therefore, the apoſtle included in his idea of *things viſible*, the earth on which we live, he could not have excluded thoſe heavenly bodies, which are equally *viſible*. Beſides, what can be more expreſs and definite in this reſpect, than that which John ſays of the *logos*, which you ſuppoſe to be the ſame with Chriſt, John i. 3. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

You ſay, p. 143, "This earth, with its inhabitants and connexions, includes all of nature "that we have any concern with.—This obſervation is applicable to the account of the creation in the firſt chapter of Geneſis; that account moſt probably, being an account only of "the creation of this earth, with its immediate "dependencies." But in that account, the moſt expreſs mention is made of the creation of the ſun, moon,

moon, and ſtars. Indeed, if we conſider the *connexions* and *dependencies* of the earth, which you ſuppoſe to have been made by Chriſt, we muſt admit that the *moon*, at leaſt, was alſo made by him, on account of its intimate connexion with, and dependence upon the earth; and if the moon, ſurely the *ſun* alſo, on which they both depend for light and heat; and if the ſun, the whole of the planetary ſyſtem, including the newly diſcovered *Georgium Sidus*, and all the *comets*, which belong to the ſun. And if the ſun, with all that is connected with it, and depends upon it, was created by Chriſt, why ſhould we not ſuppoſe that he made all that cluſter, or *ſyſtem of ſtars*, of which our ſun is one; and if thoſe ſtars, all the habitable worlds belonging to them.

In this manner I do not ſee how we can conſiſtently ſtop, till we include the whole univerſe, be the extent of it ever ſo great, or even infinite. So great is the *uniformity* in the ſyſtem of nature, that we muſt pronounce it to be *one work*, and of courſe conclude that the author of it is *one*. This indeed, is the proper argument for the unity of God on the light of nature, and this argument reſpects the immediate maker of the world, whoever that Being be.

Though you think that all the ancient Arians, and Dr. Clarke and others among the moderns, made too much of the rank that Chriſt holds in the

the creation, when they ſuppoſed him to have exiſted *before all worlds*, and to be *at the head of worlds*, you do not ſeem to agree with thoſe of the modern Arians who maintain that, on his incarnation, he was diveſted of all that power by which he made and governed the world. For you make his *wiſdom*, and his *miracles*, to be proofs of his ſuperior nature, which was alſo one of the arguments of the primitive Fathers.

I cannot ſay but I wiſh you had been a little more explicit in giving us your ſentiments on this ſubject. For whether he was thus diveſted, or not, is a queſtion that muſt be decided one way or the other; and to me it appears that you have only the choice of *Scylla* or *Charybdis*. If you ſay, as the Arians in general now do, that while Chriſt was on earth, he was diveſted of all his former power, it will follow that, in the interval between his incarnation and reſurrection, the whole ſyſtem of the government of the world was changed; and beſides, it will not be eaſy to conceive how, being reduced to the condition of a mere man, he could do any thing more than another mere man might have done.

On the other hand, if, as you ſeem to ſuppoſe, Chriſt retained all his original power, and by that power worked miracles, and raiſed himſelf from the dead, his humiliation, and eſpecially his ex-

treme dejection of mind during his agony in the garden, will be thought to be as extraordinary. For who can ſuppoſe that he who was at that very time *ſupporting all things by the word of his power*, could not ſupport himſelf, but needed the ſupport of an angel, an angel that (as pertaining to this world) he himſelf had made, and was then ſupporting?

Theſe things may not be properly *contradictions*, but they are things at which my mind revolts with no leſs force; ſo that I cannot help thinking, that it is for want of giving due attention to them, that the minds of all men do not equally revolt at them.

That *mere divines* ſhould talk ſo lightly as they ſometimes do concerning *creation*, and the poſſibility of its falling within the province of an inferior Being, I do not wonder; becauſe they have no proper idea of what creation is, or implies. They have no conception of the magnitude of it, or of the wonderful extent of the laws by which the mundane ſyſtem is governed. But you, Sir, are not a mere divine. You rank high in the claſs of mathematicians, and natural philoſophers, who are daily contemplating, and making farther enquiries into, the laws of nature; who are filled with aſtoniſhment at what they do ſee of them, and who are at the ſame time well ſatisfied,

that

that all they ſee bears no ſenſible proportion to that which is unknown.

Now that a being poſſeſſing the profound wiſdom, and aſtoniſhing power, that muſt have been neceſſary to the conſtruction of ſuch a ſyſtem as this (even allowing the *matter* out of which it was made to have been prepared for him) ſhould become a child in the womb of a woman, be born, be brought up from infancy to manhood, be ſubject to all the pains and infirmities of men*, be delivered into the hands of his enemies, be crucified, and die, appears to me to be, in reality, no leſs incredible, than it does to you that the creator of *all* worlds ſhould be ſo degraded.

For between that power which is equal to the conſtruction of ſuch a world as this, *with all its connexions and dependencies*, and that power which is equal to the formation of *all worlds*, we are not able to perceive any real difference. With reſpect to *our comprehenſion*, that difference muſt be merely nominal. The leſs is, to our perception, *infinite*; and after that, if we ſay that the other is *infinito—infinite*, the *idea* is the ſame; as in our ideas, an eternity *a parte poſt* makes no addition to

* I do not ſay *other men*, for ſuch a being as this, however degraded, would never be called *a man*, by any perſon who was acquainted with his natural rank.

the idea of an eternity *a parte ante*. Each of them exceeds any definite quantity, how great ſoever.

That you, Sir, therefore, who enter into theſe ideas much more readily than I can pretend to do, ſhould ſo eaſily admit that of ſo great a degradation of your maker, and for a purpoſe for which, as you muſt allow, it is impoſſible for us to conceive that it ſhould be neceſſary, really aſtoniſhes me. And yet you are no leſs aſtoniſhed that I ſhould not adopt your views of this ſubject. Our readers muſt decide between us, and as to ourſelves, our mutual wonder will only produce a friendly ſmile.

Your attachment to the Arian hypotheſis is evidently owing, in a great meaſure, to your ſuppoſing it to have valuable *practical uſes*. You admire the condeſcenſion of ſo great a Being, as the maker of the world, and of all its dependencies, in becoming man, ſuffering, and dying for us. "I often," you ſay, p. 155, "feel myſelf deeply "impreſſed by this conſideration." This I cannot call in queſtion. But many pious trinitarians are, I doubt not, more deeply impreſſed with the conſideration of the ſupreme God becoming man, and then ſuffering and dying for us; and the conſideration of Dr. Clarke's logos (before whom your diminutive logos ſhrinks into nothing) the great created Being who exiſted from all eternity,

nity, and who created not only this world, but all worlds, would do doubt impreſs *his* mind more forcibly, and more favourable than your doctrine can impreſs yours*.

There is not, indeed, any doctrine in the Calvinſtic, or the popiſh ſyſtem, but what the advocates for them will maintain to have excellent practical uſes. With what unſpeakable reverence and devotion do the catholics eat their maker. But is this any reaſon why we proteſtants ſhould embrace their opinions?

We find ſufficient ſources of gratitude and devotion in a purer ſyſtem of chriſtianity, and ſo ſhall we do in paſſing from trinitarianiſm to high Arianiſm, from this to your low Arianiſm, and from this to Socinianiſm, even of the loweſt kind, in which Chriſt is conſidered as a mere man, the ſon of Joſeph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moſes, or any other prophet. I have myſelf gone through all theſe changes, and I think I may aſſure you, that you have nothing to apprehend from any part of the progreſs.

* "On other accounts, it [viz. the example of Chriſt] "is "more forcible in proportion to his ſuperiority; and this is true "in particular of his condeſcenſion, humility, meekneſs, and "patience under ſufferings. The greater he was, the more we "are obliged to admire theſe virtues in him, and the more "we muſt be excited to practice them." p. 153.

In every ſtage of it you have that conſideration on which the ſcriptures always lay the greateſt ſtreſs, as a motive to gratitude and obedience, viz. the love of God, the almighty parent, in giving his ſon to die for us. And whether this ſon be man, angel, or of an ſuperangelic nature, every thing that he has done is to be referred to the *love of God*, the original author of all, and to him all our gratitude and obedience is ultimately due.

Far would I be from detracting from the merit of Chriſt, or the value of his example, which I would endeavour to keep in view. But, as a veneration for him ſhould be checked when it would lead us to aſcribe to him *divine honours*; ſo, in any other reſpect, ſhould we be careful how we give to him any part of that *glory which his God and Father will not give to another.*

Now Arians, beſides placing Chriſt in a department which belongs to God only, when they make him the creator of the world, aſcribe too much to him, when they ſuppoſe, or ſeem to ſuppoſe, that it was in conſequence of his *own propoſal*, that he became incarnate, and undertook the ſcheme of our redemption. You, Sir, have not aſſerted this. But what you ſay on the ſubject, has little force on any other idea. Having ſpoken of the "priſtine dignity," of Chriſt, p. 153, and

of

of his "degrading himself to the condition of a "mortal man," you say, "This is an instance of "benevolence to which we can conceive no pa- "rallel. This is probably the admiration of an- "gels, &c."

Whatever might be the degradation of this exalted Being, if it was done at the express command of God, which he must have been sensible he had no right, or power, to disobey, there could be no greater merit in it, than in the obedience of a man to the known command of the same Lord of all. To do this readily, and chearfully, is all the merit that created beings can pretend to.

Our Saviour's own language never gives us any idea of his services to mankind, but as what he undertook in consequence of the command of God; as John vii. 28. *Then cried Jesus in the temple, as he taught, saying, ye both know me, and ye know whence I am, and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.* Such is the uniform language of our Saviour, whenever he speaks of his mission; and it suggests no other idea than that if any prophet having received a commission from God, and chearfully undertaking the execution of it.

In the idea of the merit of Christ's incarnation, as well as in other respects, there is too much of the proper trinitarian doctrine in the

ſcheme of Arianiſm, which roſe after it, and out of it. In ancient Arianiſm there was no difference in the two ſyſtems but that between a *created* and an *uncreated logos*. The *office* aſſigned to them was the very ſame. Modern Arians are by degrees dropping many articles in the ancient Arian creed; but it appears to me that, in doing this, they make a ſcheme much leſs conſiſtent with itſelf, with reaſon, or with the ſcriptures.

I am, &c.

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## LETTER III.

*Of the Creation of Matter by the Father, and the Formation of it by the Son, and other Conſiderations attending the Idea of a finite and imperfect Creator.*

DEAR FRIEND,

IT is another part of your hypotheſis, that *creation out of nothing* is the prerogative of the Supreme Being, and that Chriſt only employed the matter, which he found already produced, in the conſtruction of the world. "The formation of "this world by Chriſt does not," you ſay, p. 144, "imply *creation from nothing*; that probably be-

"ing

" ing peculiar to almighty power, but only the " arrangement of things into their preſent order, " and the eſtabliſhment of this courſe of nature " to which we are witneſſes."

Now I do not ſee why we ſhould diſtinguiſh the provinces of the *created creator*, and of the *uncreated creator* in this manner. What could *matter* be when it was firſt produced out of nothing? If it had the neceſſary properties of matter, you muſt ſuppoſe it to have been *extended* and *impenetrable*. For you will ſay that without theſe properties matter would be nothing at all; and if it had impenetrability, it muſt have had a firm coheſion of its parts, which implies a power of *attraction* in the particles of which it conſiſts; and if this freſh created matter did not immediately coaleſce into one maſs, or if there were any *pores* in it, the particles of it muſt have been endued with a *repulſive*, as well as an *attractive* power.

Again, if matter, as firſt produced, had neceſſarily the powers of attraction and repulſion, why not all that variety of attractions and repulſions which conſtitute all the different kinds of bodies? But if ſimple attraction and repulſion only be admitted, we muſt admit ſome *form* and *arrangement*, and therefore we cannot confine the exertions of the Supreme Being to the mere creation of matter.

Beſides,

Beſides, can any reaſon be imagined why the ſame great Being, who with infinite eaſe produced matter itſelf, ſhould not, with the ſame eaſe, have produced it with all that *variety*, and all that *arrangement*, which conſtitute the viſible ſyſtem of the univerſe? The whole muſt have been equally eaſy to almighty power; and the uniformity of the ſyſtem would certainly be better ſecured in this manner, than by committing it to the diſcretion, and conſequently to the indiſcretion, of inferior, and therefore imperfect agents. To me, I own there appears ſomething ſo ſtrange in the ſuppoſition of the Supreme Being having created *mere matter*, and of Chriſt having made this mere matter into a world, or worlds; it is ſo deſtitute of all probability either from appearances in nature, or the language of ſcripture, that I can hardly think it deſerves a ſerious refutation.

As to the language of *the ſcriptures*, it ſeems to me to be abſolutely inconſiſtent with this hypotheſis. According to Moſes, the ſame great Being who made the heavens and the earth, made alſo the *light*, ſeparated the waters from the earth, and made all the plants and animals with which they are both furniſhed; and no mention is made of any other Being concerned in the production of any thing, or in the government of the world, when it was made.

According to your hypotheſis, the Supreme Being made nothing more than the *earth*, or *duſt of the ground*, as it is called (if his province extended even ſo far as that) but the perſon who actually formed *man*, and who made the difference of ſexes, was Chriſt. But how does this agree with what Chriſt himſelf ſays, Mark x. 6. *From the beginning of the creation God made them, male and female.* You do not ſuppoſe that by the term *God*, he here meant himſelf; nor will you ſay, with Chryſoſtom, that Chriſt did not chuſe to intimate that himſelf was the maker of man, leſt it ſhould give offence to the Jews. You muſt, therefore, admit, that the ſupreme Being is here ſpoken of as the maker of the human race; and ſimilar to this is the uniform language of ſcripture, ſo that nothing can authorize us to depart from the plain ſenſe of it.

The Pſalmiſt had no idea of any intermediate governor of the world when he ſaid, Pſ. civ. 21. *The young lions roar after their prey, and ſeek their meat from God*; or our Saviour, when he ſaid, Matt. vi. 26. *Behold the fowls of the air, for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.*

There is another puzzling circumſtance attending your hypotheſis of a proper *creation* by the Father, and of the *formation* of things only by the Son, which is that part of the ſcheme which

which relates to *ſpirit*. For beſide *material ſubſtance*, of which the earth, &c. conſiſts, you ſuppoſe that there is alſo a derived *immaterial ſubſtance*. Was this, as well as the former, *created* by the almighty power of the Father, and afterwards *formed* into angels, and the ſouls of men, by Chriſt? This is a queſtion that ariſes from your general hypotheſis, which requires to be conſidered; and the diſcuſſion of which may occaſion ſome embarraſſment to your ſcheme.

If the inſtrumentality of Chriſt in making the world was of the ſame nature with that by which he raiſed the dead, and worked his other miracles (as to which we are aſſured, that not himſelf, but *the Father within him, did the works*) there could be no occaſion for a Being of power ſuperior even to that of man. In this ſenſe Adam, immediately after being created himſelf, might have been as good a creator as either your logos, or that of Dr. Clarke. But then this would be no proper inſtrumentality at all.

This kind of an intermediate creator cannot, therefore, be ſuppoſed. He muſt have had powers equal to the work, and if, as you juſtly obſerve, all finite Beings attain perfection by degrees*, the maker of this world muſt firſt have

* "Do not all beings riſe gradually, one acquiſition laying "the foundation of another, and preparing the way for higher "acquiſitions? p. 147.

produced

produced ſomething leſs perfect. But what evidence is there of the exiſtence of any ſuch leſs perfect production? Shall we look for this firſt *eſſay at creation* in a ſtate of the earth prior to that of which Moſes gives us an account? And when this earth ſhall be deſtroyed, will the maker of it be ſo far improved by experience, as to be able to new model it into a better form, ſo that the evils which, through want of ſkill in the creator, could not be excluded at preſent, will be excluded hereafter.

But though this *finite creator* ſhould be ever ſo much improved by obſervation and experience, ſtill his work, being the production of an *imperfect being*, muſt be imperfect; and while the reign of Chriſt continues, we can never hope to be under the conduct of a Being of infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, as long as we exiſt.

Is it poſſible that ſuch a notion as this, perfectly conſonant to the Arian hypotheſis, ſhould be contemplated with pleaſure? It gives me unſpeakably more ſatisfaction to conſider the preſent ſyſtem as the beſt poſſible; being the immediate production of a Being of infinite wiſdom, and that even the *evils* of which we complain are neceſſary parts of this beſt poſſible conſtitution of things.

I am, &c.

## LETTER IV.

*Conſiderations relating to the Origin and Hiſtory of the Arian Doctrine. Of Chriſt not being the Object of Prayer, and of the Claim of Arians to the Appellation of Unitarians.*

DEAR FRIEND,

YOU cannot ſay that Chriſt himſelf ever dropped any hint that he was either the maker, or the governor of the world; and, as I have argued at large, in my controverſy with Dr. Horſley, and in my *Hiſtory of early Opinions concerning Chriſt*, if the apoſtles had, at any time, been informed of the truth of a doctrine, which they could never have learned from the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament (in which nothing is ſaid of *the Meſſiah* being the maker of the world) a doctrine of which they could have had no ſuſpicion from any thing that they obſerved while they lived and converſed with Chriſt, we muſt have perceived ſome traces of it in their hiſtory. It was a *new idea*, and of ſuch great magnitude, and ſo diſtinguiſhingly honourable to their maſter, compared with Moſes, or any of the preceding prophets, as muſt have excited the greateſt aſtoniſhment in both the friends and the enemies of chriſtianity.

It

It was an opinion at which the minds of all Jews muſt have exceedingly revolted, and therefore would have required to have been largely inſiſted upon, and copiouſly defended, even much more than the doctrine of the admiſſion of gentile converts into the chriſtian church, without conformity to the inſtitutions of Moſes; ſo that we ſhould not have been left, as we now are, to infer this extraordinary doctrine from two or three expreſſions in caſual epiſtles.

I have alſo ſhewn that the doctrine of the ſimple humanity of Chriſt, how incredible ſoever you may think it makes the goſpel to be, was that alone which was received by the great body of the primitive chriſtians, both Jews and Gentiles. They were in poſſeſſion of the books of the New Teſtament, and for their uſe they were written, and yet they ſaw in them no ſuch doctrine as that of the creation of the world by Chriſt, or even that of his pre-exiſtence. I have alſo proved (as I muſt be allowed to ſay till I ſee it diſproved) that the doctrine of the world being made by a created Being was (if we except the Gnoſtics) abſolutely unknown in the chriſtian church till the time of Arius. Alſo, the acknowledgments of Athanaſius, and of all the orthodox Fathers of the church, imply nothing leſs than the general prevalence of the doctrine of the *ſimple humanity* of Chriſt, and by no means that of his pre-exiſtence, or ſuperangelic nature. How then can that be received

ceived as the doctrine of the ſcriptures, which was never underſtood to be ſo, for ſo long a period?

I have likewiſe ſhewn that, till the ſame period, all the learned chriſtians ſuppoſed that Chriſt had a proper *human ſoul*, beſides the *logos* that was united to him, and that this logos (by which they ſuppoſed the world to have been made) had been an eſſential attribute of God the Father, a ſyſtem fundamentally different from that of Arianiſm. It muſt therefore require the moſt expreſs evidence from the ſcriptures, to prove *from them* the truth of a doctrine unſupported by any appearance in nature, and that was not diſcovered to be contained in the ſcriptures of the Old or New Teſtament, till three hundred years after Chriſt.

Another part of the antient Arian hypotheſis, viz. that of Chriſt having been the perſon by whom the ſupreme God had intercourſe with the Patriarchs, you diſclaim; juſtly thinking it to be expreſsly contradicted in the firſt verſe of the epiſtle to the Hebrews. But the ſeparation of two ſuch old and intimate friends, as this opinion, and that of Chriſt having made the world, is, I think, not a little hazardous with reſpect to them both. And ſurely it might naturally be expected, that if Chriſt be that Being who made the world, who, of courſe, ſupported it by his power, and who

at

at length became incarnate in it, and died for it, he would be the proper medium of all the divine intercourſe with it. Can it be ſuppoſed that the maker of men had nothing to do with them from their creation to the time of their redemption?

You alſo reject another part of the ancient Arian hypotheſis concerning Chriſt, viz. that he is the proper object of prayer. And yet it is ſo natural that the maker and preſerver of men, and of the world, ſhould be the object of prayer, that, in my opinion, nothing could have prevented the practice, but ſome very expreſs prohibition to worſhip him, which we no where find in the ſcriptures. It is only the idea of Chriſt not being preſent with us, together with its not being in his power to help us, that can make him, or any other Being, not to be the proper object of prayer to us. For there cannot be any thing unreaſonable in our aſking of any Being a favour which it is in his power to grant, provided he be acceſſible to us.

You ſay of the Father, p. 97, "There is no "other Being concerning whom we have ſuffi- "cient reaſon to think that he is continually pre- "ſent with us, and a witneſs to all our thoughts "and deſires. There is, *therefore*, no other Being "to whom our prayers ought to be directed." But ſurely the Being who made, and who preſerves us, he *in whom all things conſiſt*, whether

he be finite or infinite, muſt always be preſent with us, and muſt have it in his power to grant all the petitions that we ever addreſs to God.

It is ſimply under the character of God being *the Lord our maker*, that the ſcriptures teach us to *worſhip and bow down* before him. Whatever Being, therefore, comes under the deſcription of *the Lord our maker*, we are authorized to worſhip and bow down to him; and as, according to you, Chriſt is that Being, you muſt be abundantly juſtified in making him the object of your prayers. To be the Lord our maker, and the object of prayer, are ſo naturally and neceſſarily connected, that if, by any argument whatever, it can be proved that Chriſt is either not the one, or not the other, it muſt follow that he cannot be either of them.

Moreover, all the ancient Arians allowed Chriſt the appellation of *God*, and indeed you do the ſame, when you apply to him what is ſaid of the *logos* in the introduction to the goſpel of John. For that logos is expreſsly ſaid to be *God*, and has the attributes of the God deſcribed by Moſes, viz. *the maker of all things that are made.* It is, therefore, no ſuch God, as Moſes himſelf is called with reſpect to Pharoah, or as any magiſtrate may be called. You make him to be a God both in *name*, and in *power*. It appears to me, therefore, not a little extraordinary, that you ſhould claim

the title of *unitarians*, when all that you can with propriety ſay is, that, though you acknowledge *two Gods*, one of them only is the object of prayer, and to be worſhipped, and the other, though your maker, and conſtant preſerver, yet, for ſome unknown reaſon, is not the object of prayer, or to be worſhipped.

Your definition of the word *unitarian*, Note, p. 69, appears to me to be quite arbitrary, and unneceſſarily complex. "By unitarians," you ſay, "I mean thoſe chriſtians who believe there is "but one God, and one object of religious wor- "ſhip; and that this one God is the Father only, "and not a trinity, conſiſting of Father, Son, and "Holy Ghoſt. An unitarian, therefore," you add, "may, or may not, be a believer in Chriſt's "pre-exiſtence."

But I ſhould think that the only natural and ſimple definition of an *unitarian* ſhould be, *a believer in one God*, or one perſon, properly entitled to the appellation of God, whether he was an object of religious worſhip, or not; which is another and independent circumſtance. If a perſon not concerned in this controverſy were aſked to give his opinion, I ſhould imagine that, if he made any addition to this definition, he would ſay, that an unitarian was a believer in *one God*, or *one Being concerned in the creation and care of the world.* And

even this is rising higher in the definition of the powers of *godhead* than the antient heathens, who were properly and professedly polytheists, ever did.

You say, that "an unitarian may, or may "not, be a believer in Christ's pre-existence," and very justly, if you mean that he pre-existed as an angel, or arch-angel, and if you can assign him any department similar to theirs. But I really cannot help considering Arians as believing in *two Gods*, while they hold that Christ, though a created Being himself, had for his department the formation of this world, the adjustment of all the laws to which it is subject, and of course the constant care and government of the whole, *supporting it by the word of his power*. And that the great Being to whom this description belongs should not be the object of prayer, is to me incomprehensible. If I thought there really was any such derived Being, always present with me, who planned all the events of my life, and whose power continually supported me, I could hardly resist the impulse to pray to him.

Lastly, if according to your definition, the one God must be *the Father only*, and they are not *unitarians* who do not make him the sole object of religious worship, how will you class the Moravians, who address no prayers to him, but to the Son only? Will you say that they are worshippers

pers of no God at all? They might even become Arians, and continue their practice of praying to Chriſt only. All the antient Arians prayed to him.

I am, &c.

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## LETTER V.

*Of the Proof from the Scriptures of the Creation of the World by Chriſt.*

DEAR FRIEND,

SURELY ſuch an hypotheſis as yours, viz. that of a great pre-exiſtent created Being, *the creator of this world, with all its connexions and dependencies*, and yet not the object of prayer; a Being which, it muſt be acknowledged, no appearance in nature would ever have ſuggeſted to us, of which we have no account in any part of the Old Teſtament (though we are there informed concerning the creation of all things) an hypotheſis which was unknown to all chriſtians, learned and unlearned, till the time of Arius, requires ſome very ſatisfactory evidence; and if all the proofs be from *ſcripture*, thoſe proofs ought to be very *numerous*, as well as very *clear*. You ought alſo to be able to give ſome good reaſon why the

ſcriptures were not underſtood to teach this extraordinary doctrine for ſo many centuries, by thoſe who muſt have been the beſt acquainted with the language in which they are written.

Now there are not, in reality, more than two paſſages, in which Chriſt is, in any ſenſe, ſaid to have *created* any thing, and theſe are not in any *hiſtorical work*, but only incidental expreſſions in the epiſtles of Paul, viz. Eph. iii. 9. *who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt*, and Col. viii. 16. *by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth; viſible and inviſible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt; and he is the head of the body the church, who is the beginning, the firſt-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell. And, having made peace through the blood of his croſs, by him to reconcile all things unto himſelf; by him, I ſay, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

As to the introduction to the goſpel of John, it is not there ſaid that any thing was made by *Chriſt*, but only by the *logos*, which we maintain to be *the word*, or *power of God*, which, as it were, reſided in Chriſt, to which he aſcribed all the miracles that he wrought, and which there can be

be no doubt *did* make all things. In Heb. i. 2. it is not ſaid that *the worlds*, but that *the ages* were made by Chriſt; ſo that ſomething muſt be meant by the phraſe very different from proper *creation*.

Without entering into a large examination of the two paſſages above-mentioned, in which *creation*, in ſome ſenſe or other, *is* aſcribed to Chriſt, I would only obſerve that neither the earth, nor the ſun, moon, or ſtars, nor any material ſubſtance, is ſpecified among the things created by him. In the former it is *all things*, in general, which is quite indefinite; and in the latter, in which the things created by him are enumerated, we only find *thrones*, *dominions*, *&c.* by the creation of which may be intended ſome exerciſe of that *power*, and authority, which were given to Chriſt after his reſurrection.

That this was the whole meaning of the apoſtle is pretty evident from two circumſtances; firſt, that this enumeration of things created by him, and conſiſting in him, cloſes with the mention of his being the *head of the body the church*, as if that was intended to comprehend all the preceding particulars. Secondly, as in the former part of the paſſage, all things that are in heaven and earth, viſible and inviſible, are ſaid to be *created* by Chriſt, in the latter part of it all things in heaven and in earth, are ſaid to be *reconciled* by him; ſo that thoſe two expreſſions *created* and *reconciled*, may

well be ſuppoſed to be ſynonymous to each other, and to be deſcriptive of the *new creation*, or *renovation* of the world by chriſtianity. And this is the more probable, from the apoſtle's enlarging on this idea in the verſes immediately following thoſe quoted above, *And you, that were ſometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds, by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, &c.*

Had the term *creation* never been applied in the ſcriptures to any thing but the creation of material things, there would have been ſome plauſibility in your argument from theſe two texts. But you know it is very uſual with the ſacred writers to deſcribe the *renovation* of things by this term, and eſpecially that great and happy change in the ſyſtem of human affairs which was brought about by the goſpel. This uſe of the term *creation* in the New Teſtament ſeems to have been borrowed from the ſame uſe of it in the Old, and eſpecially in Iſ. lxv. 17. *For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former ſhall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create. For behold I create Jeruſalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.* In this figurative language, it is evident, that the prophet deſcribes the new and happy ſtate of things, which is to take place *in the latter days*, when the Jews will be reſtored to their own country, and Jeruſalem, here ſaid to be *created*, will be *rebuilt*, with great ſplendor.

There

There are a variety of paſſages in which the term creation is evidently uſed in this ſecondary ſenſe in the New Teſtament, as 2 Cor. v. 17. *If any one be in Chriſt he is a new creature.* Gal. vi. 15. *In Chriſt Jeſus neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature.* Eph. ii. 10. *We are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works.*

The very ſame word which is uſed when things are ſaid to be *created* by Chriſt, is even applied to human inſtitutions; as in 1 Pet. ii. 3. *ſubmit yourſelves to every ordinance of man* (πασῃ ανθρωπινῃ κτισει) *every creation of man*; and it is remarkable that the creation which is aſcribed to Chriſt in the epiſtle to the Colloſſians, is of the ſame nature with this which is here aſcribed to men, viz. that of *dominions, principalities, and powers.*

Now ſince it is moſt evident that the term *creation* is uſed in two ſenſes, the one literal, and the other figurative, you ought not to determine the application of it, in any particular paſſage, to either of them, without a reaſon. And ſince the creation of the heavens and the earth, whenever they are expreſsly mentioned, is conſtantly aſcribed to God the Father; and the *figurative creation* only, where *that* is evidently intended, to Chriſt, we are certainly not authorized to aſcribe to him any other creation than the latter, in any paſſage in which the expreſſion is indefinite. If this

this be not a natural and juſt rule of interpretation, I am not acquainted with any that ought to be called ſuch; and this clearly gives the creation of the world to the Father, and not to Chriſt.

After reciting thoſe paſſages which you think prove that the apoſtles conſidered Chriſt as the maker of the world, but without any notice of the Socinian interpretations of them, you ſay, Note, p. 141, "It is a circumſtance a little diſ-"couraging, in reciting this evidence from ſcrip-"ture, that ſome modern Socinians would not be "convinced by it, were it ever ſo clear and de-"ciſive." Then, mentioning my name with a degree of reſpect to which I cannot think myſelf entitled, you ſay, "he intimates that had this "been the opinion of the apoſtles, we ſhould not "be bound to receive it."

Now, unleſs you believe the plenary and univerſal inſpiration of the apoſtles, which you will not pretend to do, I do not ſee why you ſhould be at all ſtaggered at this. Suppoſe any of the apoſtles had incidently ſpoken of the ſun and ſtars revolving round the earth (which, if they had given any opinion on the ſubject, they probably would) ſhould you have ſubſcribed to it? You would have ſaid, that ſuch an opinion had no connexion with their proper commiſſion. Shew then the *neceſſary connexion* (for of *imaginary* and *remote* connexions there is no end) between any thing in,

in, or belonging to, the commiſſion of the apoſtles, *Go, and teach all nations, &c.* and the doctrine of the making of the world by Chriſt. It certainly was not *neceſſary* that he who came to *redeem* the world (whatever you mean by that term) ſhould have *created* it alſo.

As I have obſerved before, you cannot ſay that Chriſt himſelf ever dropped the moſt diſtant hint of his having been the maker of the world. Nay, the contrary, as I have ſhewn, is implied in what he ſaid. We ought therefore, to have very good and clear evidence, to think that the apoſtles meant not only to *advance* ſo much above what had been taught by their maſter, but really to teach a contrary doctrine.

Had I been living in the age of the apoſtles, and heard any of them advance ſuch an opinion, I think I ſhould have taken the liberty to aſk their authority for it. The Jews, who looked to the prophets for the character and office of the Meſſiah, where they ſaw nothing of the kind, might well have ſaid to any of them who ſhould have taught ſuch a doctrine as this, *though bringeſt ſtrange things to our ears.* That ſuch a remark does not appear to have been made, amounts, in my opinion, to a proof that no ſuch doctrine was taught.

I am, &c.

## LETTER VI.

*Of the Argument for the pre-exiſtent Dignity of Chriſt from his working Miracles.*

DEAR FRIEND,

I Shall now drop the conſideration of Chriſt having been the creator of the world, and attend to what you have ſaid of his *pre-exiſtent dignity* in general. Among other proofs of this, you ſay, p. 125, "the hiſtory of our Saviour as given in the "New Teſtament, and the events of his life and "miniſtry, anſwer beſt to the opinion of the ſu- "periority of his nature," and among other particulars, you enumerate "the wiſdom which diſ- "covered itſelf in his doctrine, and by which he "ſpake as never man ſpake, that knowledge of "the hearts of men, by which he could ſpeak to "their thoughts, as we do to one another's words, "and thoſe miraculous powers by which, with a "command over nature like that which firſt pro- "duced it, he ordered tempeſts to ceaſe, and gave "eyes to the blind, limbs to the maimed, reaſon "to the frantic, health to the ſick, and life to the "dead."

Theſe

Theſe inſtances of wiſdom and power would indeed be a proof of a nature ſuperior to man, if in any proper ſenſe, this wiſdom and power could be ſaid to be *his own*, or to belong to him, as the powers of walking and ſpeaking belong to men in general, powers which we can exert whenever we pleaſe. But the reverſe of this is moſt clearly aſſerted by our Lord himſelf, John xiv. 10. *The words that I ſpeak unto you I ſpeak not of myſelf, but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doth the works.*

This is indeed fully acknowledged by yourſelf, in your *Sermon on the reſurrection of Lazarus*, where you ſay, p. 331, "the manner in which he "referred his miracles to the will and power of "God, requires our attention. After the ſtone "was taken away, he made, we are told, a ſolemn "addreſs to God; and lifting up his eyes ſaid, "Father, I thank thee that thou haſt heard me. "This implies that his ability to work his mi-"racles was the conſequence of his having prayed "for it. Throughout his whole miniſtry, he was "careful to direct the regards of men to the deity, "as the fountain of all his powers. His language "was, *the Father who dwelleth in me, he doth the "works. I can of my own ſelf do nothing. I came "to do the will of him that ſent me.*" This is very ingenuous, but ſurely not very conſiſtent with your inferring the ſuper-human nature of Chriſt from his miracles, which, according to your own account,

count, might have been wrought by any man, equally aided by God.

The perſons who ſaw the miracles of Chriſt, and who muſt have been as good judges in the caſe as we can pretend to be, never inferred from them that he was, *in himſelf*, of a nature ſuperior to man, but only that *God was with him*, and acted by him, as he had done by Moſes. Among others, Nicodemus ſays, John iii. 2. *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God. For no man can do theſe miracles that thou doſt, except God be with him.* After he had cured a perſon ſick of the palſy at Capernaum, we read, Matt. ix. 8. *When the multitude ſaw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given ſuch power unto men.* After the cure of the demoniac, on the deſcent of Chriſt from the mount of transfiguration, Luke ix. 43. it is ſaid, *they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.* And after his raiſing the widow's ſon to life, it is ſaid, Luke vii. 16. *And there came a fear on all, and they glorified God, ſaying, that a great prophet is riſen up among us, and that God had viſited his people,*" meaning, no doubt, as he had done the Iſraelites in Egypt, by ſending Moſes to them.

Beſides, I do not ſee how your argument for the ſuperior nature of Chriſt from his miracles is conſiſtent with what you ſay, Note, p. 140, of the ſuſpenſion of his powers. " That humiliation of

" Chriſt,

" Chriſt, and ſuſpenſion of his powers, which is " implied in his being made a man, and growing " up from infancy to mature age, ſubject to all " our wants and ſorrows, is indeed, as to the man- " ner of it, entirely incomprehenſible to us."

But perhaps your idea was, that his natural powers were ſuſpended only from the time of his incarnation to that of his public miniſtry; when the full exerciſe of them was reſtored to him, ſo that he wrought his miracles with no more particular aſſiſtance than I have in writing this book. But ſuch a temporary ſuſpenſion and reſtoration of his powers is a mere arbitrary ſuppoſition, without any foundation in the hiſtory, or rather in contradiction to all thoſe paſſages that imply the immediate agency of the Father in the miracles of Chriſt. There is alſo, in this caſe, a difficulty which I have mentioned before, and to which you do not ſeem to have given ſufficient attention, viz. that in this interval of thirty years, the government of the world was in different hands, and yet without any change being, I preſume, perceived in the conduct of it.

I am, &c.

## LETTER VII.

*Of the Argument for the pre-existent Dignity of Christ, from his being supposed to have raised himself from the Dead, and from his voluntarily dismissing his Spirit when he died.*

DEAR FRIEND,

"ANOTHER fact," you say, p. 128, "of the "same kind" (viz. which proves his nature to be superior to that of man) "in his raising "himself from the dead. This he seems to have "intimated, when he says to the Jews, *Destroy this* "*temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.* "But more expressly in John x. 17, 18. *There-* "*fore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my* "*life that I may take it again. No one taketh it* "*from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have* "*power to lay it down, and I have power to take it* "*again. This commandment have I received of my* "*Father.* In all other places *God* is said to have "raised Christ from the dead; and these words "inform us how this is to be understood. God "raised Christ from the dead by giving him a "power to raise himself from the dead, and not "only himself, but all the world."

But

But can you ſuppoſe that, if every thing which exceeded the power of an ordinary man, that was *ſeemingly* done by Chriſt, was not *really* done by him, but by God who was with him, while he was *alive*, the caſe was not the ſame with every thing that reſpected him when he was *dead?* Or can you imagine that, if the apoſtles had *underſtood* him to mean what you do, in the expreſſions above quoted, they would not have made the greateſt account of the circumſtance, and have expreſſed it in the cleareſt terms *after his reſurrection*, as a proof of his pre-exiſtent dignity, and ſuperior nature? But, as you acknowledge, "in all other places GOD is ſaid to have raiſed "Chriſt from the dead;" and though the reſurrection of Chriſt is frequently mentioned by them, there does not occur a ſingle expreſſion, in all their preaching or writing, that, by any mode of conſtruction, can be interpreted into an intimation, that they had the idea of his having raiſed himſelf from the dead. It is plain, therefore, that his diſciples did not underſtand him to mean what you do in the expreſſions you have quoted.

Beſides, the expreſſions which you have quoted, eaſily admit of another interpretation; whereas, in the numberleſs paſſages in which God is ſaid to have raiſed Chriſt from the dead, the language is plain, ſo as to give no ſuſpicion of one thing being ſaid, and another thing being intended. And ſurely we ought to interpret what is leſs intelligible

by what is more ſo, and not that which is more intelligible by that which is leſs ſo, which is the rule which you have followed.

But let us interpret the language that Chriſt uſed by itſelf. He ſays *I have power to lay down my life*, and *I have power to take it again*. If therefore the latter power was voluntary, and exerted at his own pleaſure, ſo was the former. But did Chriſt die, that is, expire on the croſs, by any proper act of his own, and not as the natural conſequence of his crucifixion? This is very far from any thing that is ſaid, or that is intimated, by the hiſtorians; and if it had been the fact, would have reflected the greateſt diſhonour upon him, and muſt have had a very bad effect with reſpect to his example in ſuffering; as it would have been ſaid, that he exerted a power to to ſhorten his ſufferings, of which his followers were not poſſeſſed. And the natural ſuſpicion would have been, that by the ſame power by which he ſhortened his ſufferings (putting a period to his own life, and thereby certainly authorizing ſuicide) he prevented the natural effect of ſcourging and crucifixion, ſo as to have felt no pain at all in the whole of the tranſaction. Far be ſuch thoughts as theſe from thoſe who profeſs to reſpect and honour Chriſt, as the *author of their faith*, and the pattern they propoſe to follow.

You

You ſeem, however, to have adopted this idea of Chriſt having voluntarily diſmiſed his ſpirit, ſtrange as it appears to me, equally diſhonourable to Chriſt, and unfriendly to the goſpel. For you ſay, Note, p. 126, "After hanging on the croſs "a ſufficient time, and crying with a loud voice "*it is finiſhed*, he bowed his head, and diſmiſſed "his ſpirit (παρεδωκε το πνευμα). This was dying "as no one ever died, and verified his declara- "tion, that no one took his life from him, but "that he gave it up of himſelf."

On this ſubject, which is of ſome importance, I wiſh to make a few obſervations.

1. Had it been the real opinion of the writers of the goſpel hiſtory, that Chriſt voluntarily diſmiſſed his own ſpirit, and did not die as other men do, by the exhauſting of what may be called, the *vital powers*, they would *all of them*, have expreſſed themſelves ſo clearly, as to have put the matter out of doubt. The thing was ſo new, and ſo extraordinary, that none of them would have contented himſelf with deſcribing the fact, in ſuch language as could have led any one to conclude that he *might* have died as other men did. But both Mark and Luke, deſcribing the death of Chriſt, ſimply ſay εξεπνευσε, *he expired*, or *breathed his laſt*, though Matthew ſays, αφηκε το πνευμα, and John, whom you quote, ſays, παρεδωκε το πνευμα.

2. Had you looked into Wetſtein on Mat. xxvii. 49. you would have found four examples of natural deaths being deſcribed by heathen writers, in the ſame manner as the death of Chriſt is deſcribed by Matthew and John. Euripides uſes the very ſame phraſe with Matthew αφηκε το πνευμα. In two of Ælian, and one of Herodotus, we have αφηκε την ψυχην. In the Sepuagint, Gen. xxxv. 18. the death of Rachel is deſcribed in the ſame manner, εν τω αφιεναι αυτην την ψυχην, literally *when ſhe diſmiſſed her ſoul?* How then can any ſtreſs be laid on this phraſeology? How does it prove that no one died as Chriſt did?

3. I would farther obſerve, that if the connexion between the body and ſoul of Chriſt was of the ſame nature with that which ſubſiſts between the bodies and ſouls of other men (and as his pre-exiſtent ſpirit is ſuppoſed to have ſupplied the place of a proper human ſoul, one would imagine that the connexion muſt have been of the ſame nature) its agency upon the body muſt, according to your idea, have ceaſed at death.

On the whole, therefore, we are abundantly authorized to interpret the very few expreſſions, on which you lay ſo much ſtreſs, agreeable to the plain and uniform tenor of ſcripture (according to which Chriſt was raiſed from the dead by the power of God his Father, and not by any power of

of his own) as only importing his voluntary acceptance of the part that he acted in life, with a view to the reward that he was to have for it, voluntarily submitting to be put to death, in order to be raised again. And I conclude, that what he said of *no man having power to take his life from him*, is best explained by his declaration, that he could have prayed to the Father, who would have sent him legions of angels to rescue him, and not by his manner of expiring on the cross.

Stress has been laid on the circumstance of Christ *crying with a loud voice* immediately before he expired, and on Pilate's wondering that he should have been so soon dead. But what Christ had previously suffered in his agony in the garden should be taken into consideration. Such distress of mind as he must have felt (probably through a great part of the night, which he passed without sleep) and which produced great *drops of sweat falling to the ground* (even though they should be supposed not to have been *drops of blood*) must have exhausted him very much. Such terror of mind as this has been known, of itself, to occasion death. No wonder then, that Christ was not able to carry his cross, and that he expired before the two thieves. As to the *loudness of his cry*, nothing is more common than great exertions of any kind before death, and they contribute to hasten death, by exhausting the vital powers.

When you ſhall have conſidered all theſe circumſtances, I flatter myſelf that you will ſee ſufficient reaſon to be ſatisfied that Chriſt did not accelerate his own death. To think that he died *naturally*, and as other men do, in and by torture, is infinitely more honourable to him, and more favourable to chriſtianity, though leſs favourable to your peculiar opinion concerning the pre-exiſtent dignity of his nature. And if the phraſe *power to take away his life*, does not mean a voluntary power of putting an end to it, the correſponding phraſe *power to take it again*, cannot be conſtrued to imply a power of raiſing himſelf from the dead.

I am, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER VIII.

*Of the Argument for the pre-exiſtent Dignity of Chriſt from particular Paſſages of Scripture ſuppoſed to aſſert, or to imply it.*

Dear Friend,

I Am rather ſurprized that you ſhould lay any ſtreſs on Chriſt's praying for *the glory which he had with God before the world was*, p. 133, when this is ſo naturally interpreted of the glory that was *intended* him before the world was. This glory was evidently the reward of what he did *in the world*, and not of any thing that he did before he came into it. John xvii. 4. *I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me to do. And now, O father, glorify thou me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

Beſides, how unnatural muſt it be to ſuppoſe that Chriſt could have any occaſion to pray for a degree of glory of which he was poſſeſſed before he came into the world, when the part that he had acted in it would naturally entitle him to ſomething more. As we are aſſured he was *exalted*, ſo

no doubt, he knew the divine intention, and may be ſuppoſed to have had that exaltation in view in the *glory* for which he prayed.

If we muſt interpret the language of ſcripture in an abſolutely literal manner, we muſt admit, as I have ſhewn in ſome of the former letters, not only that Chriſt *exiſted*, but alſo that he was *ſlain* before the foundation of the world; and not only that *he* had glory, but alſo that *we* had glory with him before the world began.

You make it an argument for the pre-exiſtent dignity of Chriſt, p. 136, that Paul ſays, 2 Cor. viii. 9. *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that though he was rich, yet for our ſakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* "When," you ſay, "did our Lord poſſeſs "riches? when did he exchange riches for poverty, "in order to make us rich? In this world, he "was always poor and perſecuted." But may not a man be ſaid to be rich, who has the power of being ſo, or is ſuppoſed to have that power? Now Martha ſays to Chriſt, John xi. 22. *I know that even now, whatſoever thou wilt aſk of God, God will give it thee*; and he himſelf ſaid, when he was apprehended, that he could have prayed to his Father, and that thereupon he would have ſent him legions of angels to reſcue him. Was not this to be *rich*, and *powerful?* And might not his declining the

the actual poſſeſſion of riches and power, which were within his reach, be called his *becoming poor?*

But you ſay, "In my opinion, the moſt deciſive "text of all is that in Phil. ii. 5. *Let the ſame "mind be in you that was in Chriſt, who,*" as you properly tranſlate it "*being in the form of God, did "not covet to be honoured as God; but made himſelf of "no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſer- "vant, and was made in the likeneſs of men. And "being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of "the croſs. Wherefore God hath alſo highly exalted "him, and given him a name which is above every "name; that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould "bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and "things under the earth; and that every tongue "ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the "glory of God the Father.*"

After reciting the Socinian interpretation of this paſſage, you add, p. 138, "It is natural to aſk, "here, when did Chriſt diveſt himſelf of the power "of working miracles? The goſpel hiſtory tells "us that he retained it to the laſt, and that he was "never more diſtinguiſhed than when, at his cru- "cifixion, the earth ſhook, the rocks were ſplit, "and the ſun was darkened. Indeed, the turn "and ſtructure of this paſſage are ſuch, that I find "it impoſſible not to believe, that the humiliation "of Chriſt, which St. Paul had in view, was not "his

" his exchanging one condition on earth for an-
" other, but his exchanging the glory he had with
" God before the world was, for the condition of
" a man, and leaving that glory to encounter the
" difficulties of human life, and to ſuffer and die
" on the croſs. This was in truth, an event
" worthy to be held forth to the admiration of
" chriſtians."

Indeed, had ſuch an extraordinary event as this really taken place, it certainly would have been aſſerted with unequivocal clearneſs, have been frequently repeated, and have been dwelt upon, as its importance required. But becauſe it is no where *clearly aſſerted*, and much leſs *dwelt upon* by the ſacred writers, I cannot perſuade myſelf that any ſuch thing ever took place. For whatever you may *infer* from this paſſage, the apoſtle neither here, nor elſewhere, *plainly ſays* that Chriſt exiſted before he was born in this world.

Whatever be meant by the phraſe *the form of God*, whether the power of working miracles, or any thing elſe, we are not told that he was poſſeſſed of it *before his birth*. To affirm that he was, is not *interpreting* ſcripture, but *adding* to it. And as the ſame exaltation of Chriſt, which you make to be the reward of this *degradation*, is always ſaid to have been the reward of his *ſuffering of death*; we are, in my opinion, abundantly authoriſed to conclude, that theſe two circumſtances, which

which had the ſame conſequences, were the ſame things, let the terms in which they are expreſſed be ever ſo different.

You aſk, "When did Chriſt diveſt himſelf of "the power of working miracles?" I anſwer, that he ceaſed to exert this power (which, to all the purpoſes of the preſent queſtion, is the ſame thing with diveſting himſelf of it) when he voluntarily yielded himſelf up into the power of his enemies; though, as he aſſures us, he might have prayed to the Father, and he would have ſent legions of angels to reſcue him out of their hands. And however his death was diſtinguiſhed by miracles, which God thought proper to work for that purpoſe, it does not appear that he himſelf was in the ſmalleſt degree inſtrumental in working them; and they did not ſave him from death, or alleviate his ſufferings in the leaſt.

Conſidering the amazing difference between the appearance of Jeſus when ſtilling the waves of the ſea, giving ſight to the blind, and raiſing the dead, and that of the ſame perſon in the hands of his enemies, and hanging on a croſs; ſurely it is not too much to deſcribe the former, by ſaying, that he was *in the form of God*, and the latter by ſaying he was *in the form of a ſlave*; crucifixion being the death to which ſlaves were uſually put. I therefore ſee no reaſon to be diſ-

ſatisfied

ſatisfied with the interpretation which the Socinians uſually put upon this celebrated text; nor do I think it to be in the leaſt degree favourable to the Arian hypotheſis.

I am, &c.

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## LETTER IX.

*Of the Argument for the ſuperior nature of Chriſt from his raiſing the Dead, and judging the World*

DEAR FRIEND,

I Now come to the conſideration of two circumſtances, on which you have laid very great ſtreſs, as inconteſtably proving that Chriſt muſt have had powers ſuperior to thoſe of man, and conſequently have been of a nature ſuperior to that of man; I mean his being deſtined to *raiſe the dead*, and *judge the world* at the laſt day. On this ſubject you expreſs yourſelf with peculiar energy, and an air of triumph.

" The ſcriptures," you ſay, p. 146, " tell us " that Chriſt, after his reſurrection, became Lord " of the dead and living, that he had all power " given him in heaven and in earth, that angels " were

" were made ſubject to him, and that he is here-
" after to raiſe all the dead, to judge the world,
" and to finiſh the ſcheme of the divine moral
" government with reſpect to this earth, by con-
" ferring eternal happineſs on all the virtuous, and
" puniſhing the wicked with everlaſting deſtruc-
" tion.—Conſider whether ſuch an elevation of a
" *mere man* is credible, or even poſſible. Can it
" be believed that a mere man could be advanced
" at once ſo high, as to be above angels, and to
" be qualified to rule and judge this world? Does
" not this contradict all that we ſee, or can con-
" ceive, of the order of God's works? Do not
" all beings riſe gradually, one acquiſition laying
" the foundation of another, and preparing for
" higher acquiſitions? What would you think,
" were you told that a child juſt born, inſtead of
" growing like all other human creatures, had
" ſtarted at once to complete manhood, and the
" government of an empire. This is nothing to
" the fact I am conſidering. The power, in parti-
" cular, which the ſcriptures teach us that Chriſt
" poſſeſſes, of raiſing to life all who have died,
" and all who will die, is equivalent to the power
" of creating a world. How inconſiſtent is it to
" allow to him one of thoſe powers, and at the
" ſame time to queſtion whether he could have
" poſſeſſed the other?—to allow that he is to re-
" ſtore and new create this world, and yet to deny
" that he might have been God's agent in origi-
" nally forming it?"

I was

I was not willing to abridge any part of this fine paſſage, to ſhew that I am not afraid to meet the full force of your argument. I ſhall not, however, attempt to anſwer this piece of eloquence (for ſuch it is) by a ſimilar one. In that I ſhould fail. But I ſhall take the liberty to *analyze* it, and interpret one ſcripture expreſſion by another. Now, there are but two particulars of much conſequence, in which the great power and prerogative of Chriſt are here ſaid to conſiſt; one is that of *raiſing the dead*, and the other that of *judging the world*.

As to the former, you will hardly ſay that Chriſt will *hereafter* raiſe the dead by any other power than that by which he raiſed them when he was *on earth*; and this, you have acknowledged, not to have been by any power properly *his own*, but that of his Father, who was in him, or acted by him. And in the ſame manner you cannot deny, both that he was in, or acted by, other mere men. For ſome of the old prophets raiſed the dead before Chriſt, as did the apoſtles after him. From this circumſtance, therefore, we are not obliged to infer that Chriſt was of a nature ſuperior to that of man.

Chriſt is alſo ſaid to *judge the world*. But whatever knowledge may be requiſite to his doing *this*, may be as eaſily imparted by God, as the power of raiſing the dead; though when you ſay that his qualifications for diſcharging this office were

were acquired *ſuddenly*, you overlook the long interval between his aſcenſion and his ſecond coming, in which you cannot ſuppoſe that he is doing and learning nothing.

However, if we interpret the ſcriptures by themſelves, you muſt acknowledge that this office of judging the world, in whatever it conſiſts, and in whatever manner it be diſcharged, is no more peculiar to Chriſt than that of raiſing the dead. Our Saviour himſelf ſays, Matt. xix. 28. *Verily I ſay unto you, that ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the ſon of man ſhall ſit in the throne of his glory, ye alſo ſhall ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael.* And the apoſtle Paul ſays, 1 Cor. vi. 2. *Do ye not know that the ſaints ſhall judge the world—Know ye not that we ſhall judge angels?* Whatever ſuperiority to angels is ever ſaid to be given to Chriſt, is here ſufficiently intimated to be given to all chriſtians. For the perſon *judging* is certainly ſuperior to the perſon *judged*.

You may ſay, that we are to underſtand the term *judging* literally with reſpect to Chriſt, but figuratively with reſpect to his diſciples. But this is quite arbitrary, and unauthorized. Judging the world, therefore, is no proof of a nature ſuperior to that of man. Nay, ſo far is this buſineſs of *judging* from being conſidered as a proof of a *ſuperior nature*, that our Saviour himſelf re-

preſents it as peculiarly proper to him as *a man.* John v. 27. *And hath given him authority to execute judgment alſo, becauſe he is the ſon of man.* Not ſo the Arian will ſay, but becauſe he is the *ſon of God,* and was ſo before all worlds. But this is being *wiſe above what is written.*

In this manner it is eaſily ſhewn, that, whatever *glory,* or *power,* is attributed to Chriſt in the ſcriptures, the ſame *in kind,* if not *in degree,* is aſcribed to all his diſciples, and eſpecially his apoſtles. Indeed, this is fully aſſerted in general, but very expreſſive terms, by our Saviour himſelf, in his laſt ſolemn prayer, in which he ſays, John xvii. 22. *And the glory which thou gaveſt me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one.* The apoſtle Paul alſo ſays, Rom. viii. 17. *And if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt; if ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may be glorified together.* From this it is impoſſible to collect any idea of difference, except in *precedence,* of Beings of the ſame rank. On this idea Chriſt is ſtiled *our elder brother.* But how could he be conſidered as our *brother,* if he was our maker? The difference would be far too great to admit of any ſuch compariſon

Thus, I imagine, I have in ſome meaſure anſwered your demand, in the Note, p. 130, in which, after exhibiting what may be called *the low Socinian ſcheme,* "which alone," you ſay, "is tenable,"

"able," you add, "The conſequence of thus low-
"ering Chriſt before his death, is the neceſſity of
"lowering him likewiſe ſince his death. And
"accordingly this able writer, whoſe candour ap-
"pears to be ſuch as will not ſuffer him to evade
"any fair inference from his opinions, has far-
"ther intimated, that Chriſt's judging the world
"may mean leſs than is commonly believed, and
"perhaps the ſame that is meant, 1 Cor. vi. 2.
"where it is ſaid that the *ſaints are to judge the*
"*world.* I hope that ſome time or other he will
"have the goodneſs to oblige the public by ex-
"plaining himſelf on this ſubject; and when he
"does, I hope he will farther ſhew how much
"leſs than is commonly believed we are to un-
"derſtand by Chriſt's *raiſing the world from the*
"*dead.*"

If by Chriſt's raiſing men from the dead *here-after*, you underſtand a raiſing them by a power different from that by which he raiſed them *here*, viz. a power that may, in any proper ſenſe, be called *his own*, which you ſometimes ſeem to apprehend, and which indeed your argument requires, my idea of it is very different from yours. But then I think you will not eaſily find any authority for your opinion in the ſcriptures.

There muſt always be great uncertainty in the interpretation of prophecies not yet fulfilled. We

cannot, therefore, expect to underſtand what is meant by the phraſe *judging the world by Chriſt*, or *by the ſaints*; but it is very poſſible that it may be ſomething very different from what the literal meaning of the words would convey to us. Perhaps neither the ſaints, nor Chriſt, will then diſcover any greater diſcernment of characters than all men, even thoſe who ſhall then be judged, will be poſſeſſed of; in conſequence of which every perſon preſent may be ſatisfied, from his own inſpection, as it were, that every character is juſtly diſcriminated, and the condition of all perſons properly determined; all having the ſame intuitive knowledge of themſelves, and of each other; all equally judging from the appearances which will then be preſented to them. Indeed, a general conviction of the equity of the proceedings of that great day, ſeems to require this general knowledge.

You expreſs much ſurprize at the Socinian interpretation of the ſcriptures, and I, in my turn, cannot help expreſſing ſome ſurprize, that the compariſon of ſome prophetic phraſes of ſcripture with the fulfilment of them, ſhould not have led you to ſuſpect that much leſs than the words literally intimate may be intended by what is ſaid of the world being judged by Chriſt. I ſhall recall to your attention two prophecies, as they may be termed, of this kind.

When

When God appointed Jeremiah to be a prophet, he ſaid, Jer. i. 10. *See, I have this day ſet thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to deſtroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.* Do not theſe phraſes, literally interpreted, imply that as much power was given to Jeremiah in this world, as is ever ſaid to be given to Chriſt in the next? And yet we are ſatisfied, that all that was meant by them was, that by him God would ſignify his intentions concerning what *he* would do with reſpect to various nations in the neighbourhood of Judea, and that Jeremiah, perſonally conſidered, had no more power than any other man.

Our Lord ſaid to Peter, Matt. xvi. 19. *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on earth ſhall be bound in heaven, and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven.* To appearance, this was giving Peter more power than was given to Jeremiah. But if we conſider what was actually done by Peter, and the other apoſtles (for the ſame power is elſewhere given to them all) we ſhall find that much leſs was intended by this phraſeology, than the literal import might lead us to imagine.

Interpreters differ with reſpect to its meaning. But it is evident that, at the moſt, it could only mean the apoſtle's being empowered

to ſignify the will of God, and to pronounce what *he* would do; as when Peter paſſed ſentence upon Simon, Acts viii. 20. and upon Sapphira. For theſe are the greateſt acts of power that we ever find to have been exerciſed by Peter, or any of the apoſtles. But this was no power of *their own*. Neither, therefore, are we authorized, from the language of ſcripture, to infer that Chriſt will hereafter exerciſe any more power than he did on earth, which was no more than any other man, aided as he was by God, might have exerciſed.

I am, &c.

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## LETTER X.

*Of the Hypotheſis which makes Chriſt to be a mere Man, naturally as fallible, and as peccable, as other Men.*

DEAR FRIEND,

YOU expreſs much ſurprize at my ſuppoſing Chriſt to be naturally *peccable* and *fallible*. But the maxims on which this is advanced with reſpect to him, you muſt admit to be juſt, when applied to any other man appearing in the cha-

racter of a prophet; and, therefore, till it be proved that he is more than man, they muſt apply to him alſo. They are theſe, viz. that no man claiming a divine miſſion is to be conſidered as *inſpired* farther than he himſelf profeſſes to be ſo, than the object of his miſſion requires, and than he proves that he is by the working of miracles; and that, with regard to other things, not connected with the object of his miſſion, and which he does not aſſert to be parts of the revelation communicated to him, there is no ground to ſuppoſe him to have more knowledge than any other man, who is, in other reſpects, in the ſame circumſtances.

The doctrine of *univerſal inſpiration*, or that of any man being poſſeſſed of *all* knowledge, is manifeſtly extravagant, and would never have been ſuppoſed of Chriſt, any more than of Moſes, if it had not been imagined that he was naturally ſuperior to Moſes, and therefore had means of knowledge which Moſes had not. If you conſider the object of the miſſion of Chriſt, you muſt, I ſhould think, be ſenſible, that it did not require more natural power, phyſical or moral, than that of other men, and therefore nothing is gained by ſuppoſing him to have more. And much will be loſt, if any marks of ignorance, or of infirmity, ſhould be diſcovered in him. In that caſe, we ſhall load the defence of chriſtianity with needleſs difficulties.

Again, if other prophets might be ignorant of many things relating to themſelves, why might not Chriſt alſo? As to his underſtanding all preceding prophecies, we are no where told that he was inſpired with that knowledge, and therefore he might apply them as his countrymen of that age generally did, and as we perceive that the apoſtles, who were likewiſe prophets, did afterwards. But this ſubject is pretty largely diſcuſſed in the *Theological Repoſitory*, and I cannot help wiſhing that you had not only quoted the *ſentiments* there advanced, which, at the firſt propoſal, cannot but appear offenſive, and alarming, but had alſo examined the *arguments* there alleged in defence of them.

You lay the greateſt ſtreſs on the *immaculateneſs of Chriſt's character*, as an argument for his ſuperior nature. But though you profeſs to be determined by the language of ſcripture, you produce no paſſage in which his *ſinleſſneſs* is expreſſed in ſtronger terms than that of other good men, before and after him. If his nature was ſo *immaculate*, as that no temptation could have any effect upon him, why was he expoſed to temptation? This would then have been as abſurd as for God himſelf to have been *tempted with evil*.

That Chriſt had all the natural weakneſſes of human nature, both of body and mind, is evident from the whole of his hiſtory; and if ſo, it was impoſſible

impoſſible that he ſhould have been *naturally impeccable.* In this caſe there would have been no merit in his reſiſting temptation; and his example is very improperly urged upon us, except in the ſame ſenſe as that in which the example of God himſelf is propoſed to us; whereas it is evident, that the ſacred writers had very different ideas of the nature and uſe of theſe two examples.

Was it poſſible that the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews ſhould have had the idea that you have of the natural ſtrength of Chriſt's mind, when he ſaid of him, Heb. v. 7. *Who in the days of his fleſh offered up prayers and ſupplications, with ſtrong crying and tears, unto him that was able to ſave him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a ſon, yet learned he obedience by the things which he ſuffered.* What can be more evident from this deſcription, than that the writer conſidered Chriſt to have been naturally as weak as other men, and that he felt himſelf to be ſo?

Was this *ſtrong crying and tears*, in the view of approaching death, what might be expected from the creator and governor of the world? The hiſtory of the agony in the garden, though it does infinite honour to Chriſt as a *man*, is certainly an abundant confutation of any opinion concerning his *ſuperior nature*, and pre-exiſtent dignity.

You likewiſe make the *miraculous conception* of Jeſus as well as his immaculate nature, an argument for his pre-exiſtent dignity. Theſe two circumſtances are indeed generally urged as proofs of each other. For my own part, I ſcruple not to ſay, that I conſider them both as equally deſtitute of proper evidence; and, moreover, that neither of them would be of any advantage to the chriſtian ſcheme, if they could be proved. With reſpect to the miraculous conception, I ſhall only obſerve here, as I have done elſewhere, that if the circumſtance of having *no human father*, be an argument for a ſuperior and immaculate nature in Chriſt, the ſame thing, with the addition of having *no human mother*, muſt be allowed to be as good an argument for a ſuperior and immaculate nature in Adam. And yet he was a mere man, and naturally as liable to ſin as any of his poſterity.

You ſay, and very juſtly, of this abſolute immaculateneſs of character, p. 128, "it is incon-"ceivable that it ſhould have belonged to a mere "man," and this you well illuſtrate in the Note. But if you reflect that your *logos* is a *created*, and therefore an *imperfect* Being, you muſt allow that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, even *he* cannot be immaculate, any more than he can be omipotent, or omniſcient. It is the prerogative of God only, that great

great Being, who *only is holy*, and *who charges his angels with folly*.

If abſolute perfection of moral character be neceſſary to that of our *redeemer*, we muſt both of us go back to Athanaſianiſm. But if that be impoſſible, why ſhould we acquieſce in an imperfect angelic being, rather than in an imperfect man; eſpecially as it may eaſily be conceived, that a man like ourſelves, incident to the imperfections of other men, is, in ſeveral reſpects, better adapted to be an *example* to us, than any Being of a nature ſuperior to ours.

You acknowledge that there is ſome advantage in that hypotheſis which repreſents Chriſt as a man, who had not naturally any advantage over other men. "Some," you ſay, p. 152, Note, "have lowered him into a man, ignorant and "peccable, and no way diſtinguiſhed from the "common men of his time, except by being "inſpired. And this, I am ſenſible, by bring-"ing him down more to our own level, makes "his example in ſome reſpects more an encou-"ragement to us, and more fit to be propoſed to "our imitation." Now it is certain that the example of Chriſt, eſpecially in his humiliation and ſufferings, is frequently propoſed to us. It cannot, therefore, be any diſadvantage to a ſcheme that gives ſo important an exhortation its greateſt force.

That

That Socinus himſelf, and others who have been called after his name, ſhould have held an opinion concerning Chriſt very different from that which I have adopted, is as eaſily accounted for, as that Dr. Clarke ſhould have adopted an opinion concerning the logos much higher than that which you contend for. After Chriſt had, for ſeveral ages been generally conſidered as the ſupreme God, and the proper object of worſhip, it might be diſcovered that he was a created Being, and even a man, and yet it might be thought going too far, not to admit that this created Being, or this man, might be the appointed medium, through whom our prayers were to be preſented to the almighty Father, eſpecially as he is called a *mediator*, and an *high-prieſt*.

In the ſame manner, after admitting that Chriſt was a mere man, and not the object of any worſhip, it might be thought too degrading to him, not to ſuppoſe, that a man ſo diſtinguiſhed by God as he was, and brought into the world in ſo extraordinary a manner, as he was believed to be, had not ſome *peculiar privileges* above thoſe of other men, and other prophets, as thoſe of his being naturally *infallible*, and *impeccable*. It is no wonder that it ſhould be ſome time before even Socinians began to think that there was nothing in the chriſtian ſcheme that required this *unique* of a man, and that they ſhould have embarraſſed their hypotheſis, rather than purſue it to its proper conſequences,

conſequences, when they appeared ſo very alarming.

But now, finding this alarm to be founded on mere prejudice, and that the cauſe of it has no exiſtence in reaſon, or the ſcriptures, unitarians in general will, I doubt not, acquieſce in that opinion concerning Chriſt which makes their hypotheſis truly uniform, conſiſtent, and abundantly leſs exceptionable, viz. that which you hold out as an object of aſtoniſhment in the notes to your Sermons. In the *Theological Repoſitory*, this hypotheſis is fairly propoſed, and defended; and there I wiſh to ſee it diſpaſſionately diſcuſſed.

I am, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER XI.

### *Of the Deſign of Chriſt's Miſſion.*

DEAR FRIEND,

I do not chuſe to conſider largely what you call the other part of the Socinian hypotheſis, viz. that which relates to *the end of Chriſt's miſſion*, with reſpect to which you ſay, p. 86, that "he "not only declared, but obtained, the available-"neſs of repentance to pardon," having already advanced all that is in my power on this ſubject, in my *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*. I ſhall therefore content myſelf with making a very few obſervations.

1. If what you lay down above be true, if Chriſt came to obtain the availableneſs of repentance to pardon, is it not rather extraordinary, that this, which muſt have been the great and principal end of his coming, ſhould not have been announced by any of the ancient prophets.

2. If this had been the great end of Chriſt's miſſion, would it not have been declared to be ſo by John the Baptiſt, by our Saviour himſelf, or at leaſt by ſome of the apoſtles, and in ſuch language as could not have been miſunderſtood?

3. If

3. If ſuch, indeed, was the true cauſe of Chriſt's incarnation, is it not extraordinary that it ſhould not have been thought of by any of the chriſtian Fathers, or heretics; and that the idea ſhould never have been ſtarted till a late period, as I have ſhewn in *my Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity?*

4. The Divine Being is declared to be as merciful to repenting ſinners in the Old Teſtament as in the New, and without reference to any future event.

5. Our Saviour, giving an account of the miſſion of the preceding prophets, and of his own, in their order, certainly repreſents the great object of their miſſions to be the ſame, Matt. xxi. 33. The preceding prophets are, indeed, compared to *ſervants*, and himſelf to the *ſon of the houſholder*; but they were all ſent *to receive for him the fruits of the vineyard.*

6. As to the ſufferings of Chriſt, not only is his patience in bearing them propoſed as an example to us, but in the paſſage quoted in a former letter, chriſtians are repreſented as both *ſuffering* and *reigning* with Chriſt.

Let us not then look for *myſteries* where no myſtery is, and obſcure the beautiful ſimplicity of the goſpel; which repreſents the Divine Being as always

ways diſpoſed to receive returning penitents, as having ſent his Son, as well as other prophets, for the benevolent purpoſes of reclaiming the world from ſin, and to promiſe eternal life and happineſs to all that hearken to them.

I muſt likewiſe add a few obſervations on what ſeems to have been the ſource of your ideas of the neceſſity of Chriſt's incarnation, and the efficacy of his death. "The whole chriſtian ſcheme," you ſay, p. 170, "is founded on the ſuppoſition of "a calamity in which our race had been involved, "and which has been generally termed *the fall of* "*man*. At the ſame time," you ſay, "what the "true and full account of this event is, it is pro- "bably impoſſible for us to diſcover, or even to "underſtand, were it communicated to us. It "is recorded in the third chapter of Geneſis, but "in a manner, ſo mixed with emblems, derived "perhaps from the ancient hieroglyphical manner "of writing, and conſequently ſo veiled and ob- "ſcure, that I think little more can be learned of "it, than that there was a tranſaction at the origin "of our race, and the commencement of this "world, which degraded us to our preſent ſtate, "and ſubjected us to death, and all its conco- "mitant evils."

On this ſubject I would obſerve that, if *the fall of man*, whatever it was, had been an event on which, "the whole chriſtian ſcheme was founded,"

we

we might have expected a more expreſs declaration, from ſufficient authority, that it was ſo. But in none of the prophecies in which the Meſſiah is announced, is there the leaſt reference to this cataſtrophe, which you ſuppoſe to have made his incarnation neceſſary. Neither John the Baptiſt, nor our Saviour himſelf, ever ſaid any thing that could lead our thoughts to it. And notwithſtanding the frequent mention that is made of *the love of God in the gift of his Son* by the apoſtles, it is never ſaid to have been to undo any thing that had been done at the fall, ſome paſſages of Paul alone excepted, who calls Chriſt the *laſt Adam*, and makes uſe of terms which imply that death was introduced by Adam, as eternal life is the gift of God by Chriſt. But you know that the writings of this apoſtle abound with analogies and antitheſes, on which no very ſerious ſtreſs is to be laid.

Allowing, however, all the authority that you poſſibly can to the obſervations of Paul, it is far from carrying you to the whole extent of your hypotheſis. All mankind, the wicked as well as the righteous, are to riſe again, and nothing is ſaid by him that can poſſibly be conſtrued to ſignify that *the availableneſs of repentance to pardon* was ever loſt, or that it was recovered by Chriſt.

Beſides, all that Paul himſelf could know about Adam, and the effects of his ſin, he muſt have learned

learned from the books of Moſes, which are as open to us as they were to him. What Moſes ſays on the ſubject, you acknowledge to be very obſcure, and therefore it will not authorize implicit confidence in any particular interpretation.

"There are ſome," you ſay, Note, p. 73, "who "give ſuch interpretations of the account in the "third chapter of Geneſis, and the ſubſequent "references to it in the ſacred writings—as make "them no evidence of any ſuch event (introduc- "tory of death) as is commonly underſtood by "the FALL. But theſe interpretations, and the "opinons grounded upon them, are ſo ſingular, "that I have not thought them worth particular "notice."

The interpretations on which you paſs this cenſure, are pretty generally known to be mine. They are advanced in the *Theological Repoſitory*, with the evidence on which they are founded; and inſtead of this unqualified cenſure, it would have given myſelf, and many other perſons, great ſatisfaction, if you had thought them worthy of a ſerious examination. The opinion that I have advanced concerning the hiſtory of the fall of man, cannot, I am confident, be refuted, but on principles which ſuppoſe the plenary inſpiration of Moſes, and that of all the writers of the Old and New Teſtament, with reſpect to every thing they wrote, whether they expreſsly ſay that they were inſpired

or

or not; a poſition at which I ſuſpect your mind will revolt, as much as mine does.

As Moſes himſelf, who ſeems particularly careful to diſtinguiſh what God ſaid to him, and what came from himſelf, does not ſay that he received the account that he has given us of the creation, and fall of man, *from God*, I think myſelf at liberty to conſider it as the beſt that he could collect *from tradition*. In my opinion alſo, there are many marks of its being a very lame account. And, as I have obſerved, it is far from ſolving the difficulty it ſeems to have been intended to anſwer, viz. the introduction of death and calamity into the world. Among other things I have remarked, that the fact of the human race being originally formed male and female, and conſequently their being intended to increaſe and multiply, is a proof that they were alſo originally intended to be mortal; and that immortality is reſerved for that ſtate, in which *there ſhall be neither marrying, nor giving in marriage*, but where men ſhall *be as the angels that are in heaven*.

In the Note, p. 178, you conſider *the devil* as the tempter of Adam in the form of a ſerpent. But this could not have been the idea of Moſes, according to whom, the ſentence paſſed upon the ſerpent has no relation to any thing but to the animal ſo called. And would there be any juſtice in puniſhing the ſerpent, the mere paſſive inſtrument,

and letting the proper agent in the buſineſs go free? Moſes had no idea of any thing beyond the mere ſerpent, and I cannot allow any authority to the interpretation of the author of the apocryphal book of *Wiſdom*.

That our Saviour alludes to the agency of the devil in the firſt introduction of ſin into the world, is, I think, by no means probable. He ſays, John viii. 44. *the devil was a murderer from the beginning*. But this refers to the murder of Abel by Cain. And as to what John ſays, 1 John iii. 8. *of the Son of God being manifeſted to deſtroy the works of the devil*, it may well be ſuppoſed to mean that he came to put an end to *ſin, or moral evil*, which is referred to *the devil*, or *ſatan* as its principle, as all other *evil is*. On this account Peter is called *Satan* (Matt. xvi. 23) when he ſuggeſted an unworthy propoſal, and Judas is called *the devil* (John vi. 70.) on account of his bad deſigns.

As to *the old ſerpent*, *the devil*, and *Satan*, in Rev. xii. 9. xx. 2. on which you lay ſome ſtreſs, I really do not pretend to underſtand it. It is the language of prophecy perhaps not yet fulfilled. It muſt alſo be obſerved that, this ſame *old ſerpent*, is likewiſe called (Rev. xii. 9.) *the great dragon*, and this dragon is farther deſcribed as being *red*, and having *ſeven heads, and ten horns*, with *ſeven crowns upon his heads*. He has alſo *a tail*, by which *he drew the third part of the ſtars of heaven, and caſt them*

*them to the earth.* And, according to moſt interpreters, this red dragon, with ſeven heads, ſeven crowns, and ten horns, is not the *devil* (admitting the exiſtence of ſo extraordinary a being) but repreſents ſome earthly potentate, the enemy of chriſtianity. But whatever be the meaning of this prophecy, we are not to look into ſo myſterious a book as the Revelation, for a plain account of either the introduction of evil into the world, or the remedy of that evil. It ſeems to have been written for a very different purpoſe.

I am, &c.

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## LETTER XII.

### *The Concluſion.*

DEAR FRIEND,

I Have now troubled you with animadverſions on every thing that I think moſt open to objection in your truly excellent *Sermons*, and eſpecially in the *Notes*, in which you chiefly quote what has been advanced by himſelf, either in works that bear my name, or in the *Theological Repoſitory*. Let the arguments I have there advanced, and to which you have not directly replied, anſwer for themſelves. You juſtly obſerve, that I do not ſhrink from any conſequences of

what I have advanced. Indeed, if a *propoſition* be true, ſo muſt every *corollary* fairly drawn from it; and I have not yet ſeen any reaſon to be afraid of *truth*.

Some of the opinions on which you have ſlightly deſcanted are, I believe, novel, and a ſtep, as you may ſay, beyond what other Socinians have gone; and yourſelf, and others of my beſt friends, are a good deal ſtaggered at them. But in a ſhort time this alarm, which is already much abated, will be entirely gone off, and then I ſhall expect a calm diſcuſſion of what I have advanced; and that doctrine will, no doubt, be eſtabliſhed which ſhall appear to be moſt agreeable to *reaſon*, and the true ſenſe of *ſcripture*. May whatever will not ſtand this teſt, whether advanced by myſelf or others, ſoon fall to the ground; but let no ſentiment, however alarming at the firſt propoſal, be condemned unheard, and unexamined.

Many of our common friends expreſs ſome ſurprize that you and I, connected as we are by friendſhip, and a variety of other common circumſtances; equally, I hope, ardent, and equally unwearied, in the purſuit of truth; and having given perhaps equal attention to the ſubject of theſe *Letters*, ſhould, notwithſtanding, differ ſo much as we do with reſpect to it. Many perſons who know this, and who have not the leiſure, or the opportunity, to ſtudy this queſtion, that we have, may be led to think, that it will be in vain for *them* to attempt

to arrive at any certainty with reſpect to it; and, out of deſpair, abandon the examination. But neither you nor myſelf, ſhall think this inference a juſt one; ſince each of us may be under the influence of prejudices, unknown to ourſelves, but ſufficiently conſpicuous to others. Nay, with a beam in our own eye, we may fancy that we can diſcover a mote in that of each other.

You will, I doubt not, be able to account to yourſelf for what you will think my obſtinacy in defending principles which to you appear evidently contrary to reaſon and the ſcriptures, under the idea of their being important truths. And I alſo muſt have ſome method of ſatisfying myſelf how *you* may be as ingenuous, and as candid, as I, of courſe, think myſelf to be, and yet perſiſt in opinions, which I cannot help conſidering as wrong, and of the erroneouſneſs of which there ſeems to be the moſt abundant evidence.

Speaking of the Socinian interpretations of ſcripture, you ſay, p. 135, "I muſt own to you, "that I am inclined to wonder that good men "can ſatisfy themſelves with ſuch explanations." But you candidly add, "But I correct myſelf. I "know that chriſtians, amidſt their differences of "opinion, are too apt to wonder at one another, "and to forget the allowances that ought to be "made for the darkneſs in which we are all involved."

You are too much of a philoſopher to think that there can be any *effect* without an adequate *cauſe*; and you know that *wonder* is nothing more than the ſtate of mind into which our ignorance of the cauſes of events throw us. And therefore whenever we think we can account for any appearance, all wonder ceaſes.

You will, I know, excuſe me, if I account to myſelf for your continuing an Arian, notwithſtanding the evidence that has lately been produced in proof of the Socinian, or as I chuſe to call it, the *proper unitarian* hypotheſis, in the ſame manner in which we account for many worthy and intelligent perſons continuing catholics, or Calviniſts. This we believe to be chiefly owing to their minds having been very early impreſſed with the fulleſt perſuaſion of the truth of their reſpective principles; to their dwelling long on the arguments in favour of them (by which they are much magnified in their view) and to their not giving ſufficient attention to thoſe on the other ſide.

They may have the candour to hear, or to read arguments againſt their opinions. But their minds being previouſly indiſpoſed towards them, ſuch arguments find there nothing congenial to themſelves, and are not detained long enough to make a due impreſſion. It is like the paſſage of a ſhip through the ſea, or that of an arrow through the air. No track is left behind. Whatever it be that has

has once recommended itſelf to us, and we entirely reliſh, we wiſh to ſee confirmed; and it is always with ſome degree of averſion that we hear any thing that tends to diſturb what we think already well ſettled.

You have read, I doubt not, with as much care and attention as, from the previous ſtate of your mind, could reaſonably be expected, all that has been written by Dr. Lardner, by our common friend Mr. Lindſey, and by myſelf, in ſupport of the unitarian hypotheſis. But I preſume, that you have often refreſhed your mind, and recruited your former opinions, by the writings of Dr. Clarke, Biſhop Butler, Mr. Pierce, Mr. Emlyn, and other Arians, and having been early converſant with them, they have made an impreſſion like that which is ſometimes made on marble before it is converted into a ſolid form, and which nothing can afterwards efface.

On the other hand, I ſhall not be offended, if you ſhould account for my roving from one opinion to another, by ſuppoſing that I have a temper of mind too hoſtile to every thing that is *eſtabliſhed*; or if you ſhould ſay, that I am more apt to be ſatisfied with any thing belonging to myſelf, than with my *opinions*, and that I am not likely to fix long in any ſcheme.

Certain it is, that, ſo far from having much fondneſs for the opinions that I received from my education, I have gone on changing, though always in one direction, from the time that I began to think for myſelf to the preſent day, and I will not pretend to ſay when my creed will be fixed.

But whether we be apt to keep our opinions a longer or a ſhorter time, they pleaſe us ſo long as we can call them *ours*; and in that ſtate of mind it is natural to give more attention to arguments that make *for*, than to thoſe that make *againſt* them.

As to *the ſcriptures*, the peruſal of particular texts never fails to be accompanied with their uſual long approved interpretation; and we oftenеſt think of, and dwell upon, thoſe which favour our opinions. And with reſpect to thoſe which ſeem unfavourable to them, we have all got ſome method or other of diſpoſing of them, ſo that they ſhall not ſtand in our way; and theſe modes of accommodation never fail to occur to the mind along with the texts themſelves, and thereby effectually preclude the conviction they might otherwiſe bring along with them. And if we think that, upon the whole, the *ſcriptures* are favourable to our opinions, we are apt to conſider ourſelves juſtified in giving little attention to other conſiderations; which, if properly reflected upon, might ſerve to give us a better

a better inſight into the real ſenſe of ſcripture itſelf.

Thus the pious catholic having always been taught implicit confidence in the deciſions of his church, and having always underſtood our Lord literally, when he ſaid, *this is my body*, and *except ye eat the fleſh of the ſon of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*; it is in vain to object to him the natural impoſſibility of the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. *That* he leaves with God, whoſe word, he believes, aſſures him of the *fact*. In this, therefore, he thinks it his duty to acquieſce; and he even makes a merit of ſacrificing his *reaſon* to his *faith*.

In like manner, you muſt permit me to ſay, that, having, in a very early period, adopted your preſent opinion concerning Chriſt, having always conſidered the *logos* in the introduction to the goſpel of John (*which was in the beginning with God*, and *which was God*) to be deſcriptive of *Chriſt*; having always underſtood the phraſes *creation by Chriſt*, and his being *before Abraham*, &c. not in a figurative, but a literal ſenſe, you have ſatisfied yourſelf with paying but little regard to the natural improbability (though in my opinion approaching very nearly to an impoſſibility) of your hypotheſis. And then with reſpect to the numerous paſſages in which Chriſt is ſpoken of as

*a man*,

*a man*, unable *to do any thing of himſelf*, which the Athanaſians interpret of his *human nature* only, you are ſatisfied with referring them to his ſtate of *degradation*, in which he was only *in faſhion*, or *external appearance*, *as a man*.

Being thus ſecure with reſpect to the argument from *ſcripture*, which we all conſider as the great ſtrong hold of our faith; though, I doubt not, you have read with care all that I have written to prove that the great body of primitive chriſtians were unitarians, you will naturally think either that the proof is ſomewhere defective (though you may not be able to ſay *where*) or at moſt, that it can only furniſh one uncertain light to the interpretation of ſcripture, which to you appears, in this caſe, to be ſo plain, that it needs no interpretation at all.

I have not, therefore, the leaſt expectation that any thing that I have advanced in theſe *Letters* will be able to make much impreſſion on your mind; except that you may, perhaps, be led to think, that you had not ſufficient authority for concluding that Chriſt, by his ſuper-human power, accelerated his own death. On this ſubject I am willing to hope that the evidence I have produced of your having miſtaken the meaning of the evangeliſts is ſo clear, and unexceptionable, that you may not ſee much to object to it.

But

But this conceſſion, which is the utmoſt that I dare flatter myſelf with the hope of, does not materially affect your general hypotheſis. You will even probably ſtill think, that Chriſt raiſed himſelf from the dead, and will have no doubt of his being a great pre-exiſtent ſpirit, the maker of the world, from matter with which he was furniſhed by the Father; and that he condeſcended to become incarnate, for the purpoſe of making it conſiſtent with the juſtice of God to receive penitent ſinners into his favour.

On the other hand, I muſt acknowledge, that my perſuaſion of the ſimple humanity of Chriſt, and even that of his being a man, naturally as weak, as fallible, and as peccable, as other men, is ſo fixed, from my preſent ideas of the meaning of ſcripture, and a variety of other conſiderations, tending to prove that ſuch *muſt* be the meaning of ſcripture; that I have no idea of the poſſibility of my being ever brought to entertain a contrary ſentiment. Indeed, I do not think that the arguments in favour of Arianiſm can be better exhibited, and as I may ſay, concentrated, than they are in your Sermons. In all probability, therefore, you and I muſt wait for farther light till the arrival of *the great teacher death*, and the ſcenes that will follow it.

In the mean time, our difference of opinion on this ſubject will not, I am confident, make the leaſt

leaſt change in our friendſhip and affection. We are equally, I truſt, lovers of truth, and lovers of virtue; and alſo equally lovers of Chriſt, and of his goſpel, notwithſtanding our very different ideas of his perſon, and the object of his miſſion; though you conſider him as your *maker*, and I as the *ſon of Joſeph and Mary*, and (excluſive of divine communications) as poſſeſſed of no natural advantages over his father Joſeph, or any other man in a ſimilar ſituation of life in Judea.

It is likewiſe an equal ſatisfaction to both of us, to think that, on which ever ſide the truth lies, it will finally prevail over prejudice and error; and that, though the error be the opinion that we are now contending for, we are ready to ſay *amen* to a prayer for the extermination of it.

With the greateſt reſpect and affection,

I am, Dear Friend,

Yours, ſincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM,
MARCH 1, 1787.

A

# LETTER

TO THE

## Rev. Mr. PARKHURST.

אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו
הוא יחיד ואין יחידות כמוהו בשום פנים והוא
לבדו אלהינו היה הוה ויהיה:

Fid. Jud. Art. 2.

Præceptum de idolatria quasi tanti ponderis est ac reliqua omnia Mandata.

Maimonides de Idolatria.

A

# LETTER

TO THE

## REV. MR. PARKHURST.

REV. SIR,

WHEN the preceding parts of this pamphlet were nearly printed off, I received (obligingly ſent me by yourſelf) a treatiſe of yours, entitled, *The Divinity and Pre-exiſtence of Chriſt demonſtrated from Scripture, in Anſwer to the firſt Section of Dr. Prieſtley's Introduction to his Hiſtory of Early Opinions concerning Jeſus Chriſt, together with Strictures on ſome other Parts of that Work*, and I cannot paſs, without notice, the production of ſo learned a writer.

You muſt excuſe, me, however, if I ſay that, having heard ſome time ago of this publication of yours, I had, from your character, formed expectations, which I do not find anſwered by it. I had been led to imagine, that you would have criticized my *Hiſtory itſelf*, as a learned eccleſiaſtical hiſtorian, and not have contented yourſelf with replying

replying to a ſingle ſection of the Introduction to to it, which only relates to a diſcuſſion in which little *new* can be advanced, viz. of the doctrine of the ſcriptures concerning the perſon of Chriſt. The proper object of my work is to aſcertain what muſt have been the ſenſe of the books of ſcripture from the ſenſe in which they were actually underſtood by thoſe for whoſe uſe they were compoſed; and to determine what muſt have been the ſentiments of the apoſtles, by means of the opinions of thoſe who received their inſtruction from them only.

This is a new, and certainly an important field of argumentation, open to the learned part of the chriſtian world; and I had flattered myſelf, that Mr. Parkhurſt had been prepared to enter it with me. But this you entirely decline, becauſe you think, p. 147, "your time may be much "better employed." On the contrary, I cannot help thinking that, in the preſent ſtate of things, it would have been much better to go over this new ground, than to tread over again the old and beaten one.

In your Strictures, however, on my work, you think you have proved that Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp, were believers in the divinity of Chriſt. But what you have urged on this ſubject appears to me to be of little conſequence, and to have been ſufficiently obviated by what

what I have advanced in my Hiſtory; ſo that I ſee no occaſion to trouble our readers with any thing more on the ſubject. Let them compare my obſervations with your reply. Indeed, I do not know what more to ſay to any perſon, who can ſeriouſly maintain, that the appellation of *God*, perpetually applied to Chriſt in the ſhorter epiſtles of Ignatius, is no interpolation; ſuch as the example you have produced, p. 135, "I wiſh "you all happineſs in our God Jeſus Chriſt." This, Sir, is neither apoſtolical language, nor, indeed, that of any writer whatever, in any age of the church.

With reſpect to the great object of my work, you grant almoſt all that I contend for, when you ſay, p. 9, "There is but too much reaſon to ap- "prehend, what Dr. Prieſtley, in the courſe of "his work, ſeveral times mentions with triumph, "to wit, that the bulk of chriſtians have, in all "ages of the church, been inclined to the unita- "rian doctrine." And yet you ſay, p. 98, "Mr. "Howes has juſtly obſerved, that the modern "opinion concerning the humanity of Jeſus "through life, has not the leaſt countenance in its "favour from the tenets of any one of the an- "tient ſectaries." This expreſſes more confi- dence on the ſubject than Mr. Howes himſelf has done, as you include Photinus among thoſe who were not properly unitarians. How this very extraordinary poſition will be ſupported by

Mr. Howes, or yourſelf, time, I ſuppoſe, will ſhew. It muſt, however, be by another kind of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory than any that I am yet acquainted with.

As to the orthodox Fathers, whoſe writings I have made uſe of in tracing the riſe and progreſs of the doctrine of the trinity, you treat them with a degree of indifference and contempt that really aſtoniſhes me. "With regard to the follies of "the ſucceeding chriſtian writers, whether Greek "or Latin, who, *neglecting the Hebrew ſcriptures*, "idolized the very imperfect and faulty verſion "of the Septuagint, and yet frequently followed "the *ignes fatui* of their own imaginations, and "of the Platonic and other vain philoſophy,—as "to ſuch follies as theſe, I have no great objec- "tion to their being treated with the ſeverity "they deſerve, though I ſhould not myſelf chooſe "the office of executioner."

But if there be any truth in the *outline* only of my Hiſtory, the doctrine of the trinity had no exiſtence till it was ſtarted by theſe very platonizing Fathers, ſo that the *folly* you aſcribe to them muſt reflect upon the doctrine itſelf. It appears from their own confeſſion, that this doctrine gave the greateſt offence to the great body of unlearned chriſtians, who had not been taught with clearneſs any other doctrine concerning Chriſt, than that he was a man inſpired by God. You your-

ſelf produce a paſſage from Euſebius, p. 99, in which it is ſaid, that "the divinity of Chriſt was "a doctrine reſerved by the Holy Spirit for John, "as being more excellent;" and the earlieſt date of his goſpel is the year 64. Conſequently, before this time the chriſtian church muſt have been unitarian.

If I have ſufficiently proved the truth of theſe facts, and others connected with them, it muſt be in vain to pretend that the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament will admit of any other than an unitarian interpretation. And the evidence of the facts I refer to does not depend upon writings, the authenticity and purity of which are ſo queſtionable as thoſe of the apoſtolical Fathers, but on the uniform concurrent teſtimony of all the chriſtian writers, from the age of the apoſtles till long after the council of Nice; and their works have, in general, come down to us as perfect as any antient writings whatever.

I have alſo ſhewn, much at large, that the unitarians were not conſidered as *heretics* till a late period. I ſaid, that even the *Ebionites* are not directly called heretics by Irenæus. In one paſſage, however, from this writer, which you produce, p. 96, you think that it does appear, that he muſt have conſidered them in that light. But admitting this, it amounts to nothing of any conſequence, as it is expreſsly aſſerted by Je-

rom, that the Ebionites, who lived in a ſtate of ſeparation from other chriſtians, were conſidered as heretics *only* on account of their obſervance of the laws of Moſes.

As you have not even attempted to anſwer my work itſelf, I have no occaſion to examine any thing that you have advanced; but, having this opportunity of addreſſing a letter to you, I ſhall make a few obſervations on an article which you have laboured the moſt in your performance, viz. the proof, or *demonſtration*, as you call it, of the doctrine of the trinity, from the plural form of the word which is uſed to denote *God* in the Hebrew language, viz. אלהים, *elohim*, or as you write it, *aleim*.

"*Aleim*," you ſay, p. 69, "regularly and pre-"ciſely denotes *the denouncers of a conditional curſe*. "and by this very important Hebrew name, the "ever bleſſed three repreſent themſelves as *under* "*the obligation of an oath* to perform certain con-"ditions." Taking this for granted, you ſay, p. 82, "The doctrine of a plurality in Jehovah "is taught in above two thouſand places of the "Old; and I add, that this plurality is, by a num-"ber of paſſages in both Teſtaments, fixed to a "trinity." You likewiſe find an intimation, p. 16, "of the doctrine of the bleſſed unity in tri-"nity, and trinity in unity," in the three men who appeared to Abraham.

Few

Few perſons, I believe, except thoſe who pretend to find the philoſophical diſcoveries of the preſent age in the Hebrew words of the Old Teſtament, will be diſpoſed to lay any ſtreſs on this argument, or demonſtration, of yours. Baſnage and others, as zealous trinitarians as yourſelf, have ſhewn the futility of it; and till what they have written be anſwered, I ſhould be abundantly juſtified in taking no notice at all of it. I ſhall, however, as the opportunity may never occur again, make a few obſervations on this ſubject.

1. Admitting the plural form of the word ſignifying *God* to be a juſt foundation for believing that there is a plurality in the divine eſſence, it is only in one particular language, which can no more be proved to be of divine origin than any other language, and may not even have been the moſt antient; ſo that it might be merely accidental, that this word, as well as ſeveral others in the ſame language, and many in all languages, had a plural, and not a ſingular form.

2. We are no where taught in the Old Teſtament, that this myſterious doctrine of *three divine denouncers of a conditional curſe* (at the idea of which the mind recoils) is to be inferred from the form of the word *aleim*.

3. As the ſame word is uſed to ſignify the heathen gods, as well as the God of Iſrael, it

might be expected that all nations had an idea of a plurality in the eſſence of all their gods. This you in part allow, and endeavour to prove it in the caſe of *Hecate*, or *Diana*, p. 144; and you ſuppoſe, p. 156, that the Philiſtines, who applied this term to their god Dagon, "might be "uſed to compound idols." But you ought to have extended this to *all* the heathen gods, as well as to Hecate. But really, Sir, I wonder you were not ſtruck with horror at this indirect compariſon of your holy bleſſed and glorious trinity to the three-fold form of a heathen goddeſs. You might as well have pitched upon the three-headed monſter Cerberus for your purpoſe. What would you have ſaid if *I* had ſaid any thing that could have led the mind to any ſuch compariſon?

4. Can you make it appear that any of the antient Jews underſtood the word *aleim*, as you do, or that they drew any ſuch inference from it? This you ſeem to have taken for granted, and you add, p. 36, that "a very great majority of the "Jews before our Saviour's coming had apoſta-"tized from the doctrine of the divine trinity." But where, Sir, do you find the records of this great apoſtacy? And where are we to look for the remonſtrances on the ſubject, which would certainly have been made by thoſe who did not apoſtatize? Of the apoſtacy of the Iſraelites from the worſhip of the true God to that of idols, we have

have abundant evidence; but of this greater change in the ſentiments of a great majority of the nation, we have no account at all.

Of thoſe Jews who had apoſtatized from the doctrine of the trinity, you ſay, p. 36, "*they* "could not poſſibly at the time he" [Chriſt] "appeared, have ſuppoſed that the Meſſiah would "be the ſecond perſon in the trinity." And as to the Jews who were after our Saviour's time, you do not pretend to find among them any trace of the doctrine of the trinity, or of the divinity of of the Meſſiah. With reſpect to theſe you ſay, p. 33, "I muſt enter my ſolemn proteſt againſt "being guided by them, as to the ſenſe of the "ſacred books, or in any matter of religion what-"ever; becauſe the bleſſed maſter whom I pro-"feſs to follow, and to obey, has repeatedly cal-"led the predeceſſors and inſtructors of theſe mo-"dern Jews, *fools and blind*, i. e. as to religious "knowledge, and has ſaid of them, *they be blind* "*leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind,* "*ſhall not both fall into the ditch?*"

But can you, Sir, imagine that, if our Saviour had found in the Jewiſh teachers ſo capital a departure from the doctrine concerning God, as this apoſtacy from the ancient Moſaic doctrine of the trinity muſt have been, he would not have diſtinctly pointed it out, and that he would not have warned the people againſt the falſe gloſſes of the

Scribes and Pharisees upon *this* article of the law, as he did on others of much less importance? He had one fine opportunity, you must acknowledge, of doing this, and of explaining the doctrine concerning the divine essence, when he was questioned about *the first commandment*, Mark xii. 28. But both the Scribe and himself, on that remarkable occasion, assert the absolute unity of the divine nature.

You do maintain, however, p. 119, that our Lord's own disciples were at least *sufficiently prepared* by his discourses to consider him as God, during their intercourse with him. But how does this appear, when after his crucifixion we find two of his disciples on their way to Emmaus, expressing their highest admiration of him in these words, Luke xxiv. 19. *Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed, before God and all the people.* Is this, the natural language of men who had ever considered Christ as properly God, or who were at all prepared so to do.

I shall not enter with you into a discussion of the meaning of *particular texts*; having, as I think, sufficiently explained all those on which you descant, in my other writings. But I cannot help noticing your very curious interpretation of of Christ's saying, John v. 30, that *he could do nothing of himself.* "We see then," you say, p. 62, "in what sense only the Son of God, in this pas-

" ſage, diſclaims any power of his own, and ſays, " that *he can do nothing of himſelf*, viz. as acting " diſtinctly from his Father, with whom he was " united." But would you, Sir, have put the ſame conſtruction on any ſimilar ſaying of Moſes, or any other prophet? Beſides, if in this ſenſe only Chriſt could do nothing of himſelf, in the ſame ſenſe the Father alſo could do nothing of himſelf; ſince, on your hypotheſis, he muſt always act in conjunction with the Son. But where do you find any aſſertion like this in the ſcriptures?

Indeed, Sir, unleſs you, or your friends, can make a better defence than you have yet done of the doctrine of the trinity, notwithſtanding you ſay, Adv. p. 6. you conſider me " as by no means a formid- " able opponent on ſcriptural ſubjects," the conſequence of which you expreſs ſo much dread, ibid. p. 7. viz. that " the religion of this once chriſtian " land will be reduced to a level with Maho- " metaniſm, and even in ſome reſpects below it," muſt follow. In this method of characterizing *unitarianiſm*, you think, no doubt, to bring an odium upon it. But the compariſon is now too much hackneyed for that purpoſe; and you are miſtaken if you think that I am aſhamed to avow my agreement with the Mahometans, or any other part of the human race, in the doctrine of the *divine unity*, and to worſhip together with them, *the one God and Father of all, the maker of heaven and earth*.

You,

You, Sir, as well as my other adverſaries think, I preſume, to derive ſome advantage to your cauſe, from depreciating my knowledge of the learned languages, which is ſo neceſſary in theſe theological diſcuſſions. Dr. Horſley will not allow me to know any thing of Greek. Mr. Badcock makes me ignorant even of Latin, and you ſay of me, Adv. p. 6. "he appears to have but a "ſlender acquaintance with the original language "of the Old Teſtament, and never to have read "the Hebrew Bible with care and attention. If "he had, it ſeems almoſt impoſſible that he "ſhould fallen into ſuch palpable errors as he "has done." You even inſinuate, p. 3. that I may not know "that ים is as truly a plural ter-"mination in Hebrew, as —s is in our lan-"guage."

Whether I be ignorant of Hebrew, or not, your *proofs* of my ignorance are not a little curious. One of them is that, "in the ſection of my "Introduction, which profeſſedly relates to the "ſcriptures in general, I have not produced a "ſingle Hebrew word." (Adv. p. 6.) which I might have done, and yet have known very little of the language. And as to the unpardonable miſtake I have fallen into, it is no other than I dare ſay, Biſhop Lowth, or Dr. Kennicott, would have fallen into as well as myſelf. For neither of them would probably have thought of inferring the doctrine of the trinity from the word *aleim*.

On

On this ſubject of the knowledge of Hebrew, I will ſay (and you may ſmile at me if you pleaſe) that as I have ſaid I would not exchange my knowledge of Greek for that of Dr. Horſley, ſo neither would I exchange my knowledge of Hebrew with even that of Mr. Parkhurſt, unſeen, and unexamined.

I have, in the courſe of my life, given very particular attention to the Hebrew language. I began the ſtudy of it when I was about fifteen, and remember that at about eighteen I read in the hiſtorical books of the Old Teſtament, from Hebrew into Engliſh at family prayers. I taught Hebrew to a friend now living, before I was eighteen. Before I was twenty, I had read the Hebrew Bible twice through, once with points, and once without points. I had, likewiſe, read other books in Hebrew beſides the Bible, and had begun the ſtudy of other oriental languages. I was then pretty well acquainted with Syriac, and was able to read Arabic. After this, though my attention was drawn to other objects, I never wholly laid aſide my application to Hebrew; and it has happened that, within leſs than ſix months of the laſt year, I read the Hebrew Bible quite through, chiefly in Kennicott's edition (led to it in ſome meaſure, by a preſent being made me of that noble work by a perſon unknown, and for which I take this opportunity of returning thanks for it) and this I did without conſidering it as any great addition

addition to my other buſineſs. If after all this, I know ſo very little of Hebrew as you repreſent, there muſt be ſomething very extraordinary in the caſe; and the ſtory will yield but little encouragement to other perſons to apply to it.

But really, Sir, the important queſtion is not, whether Dr. Horſley or myſelf know more of Greek, or whether you or I know more of Hebrew, but which of us makes the beſt uſe of what we do know.

With real reſpect, though with great difference of opinion, I am,

Rev. Sir,

Your very humble Servant.

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM,
MARCH 7, 1787.

A

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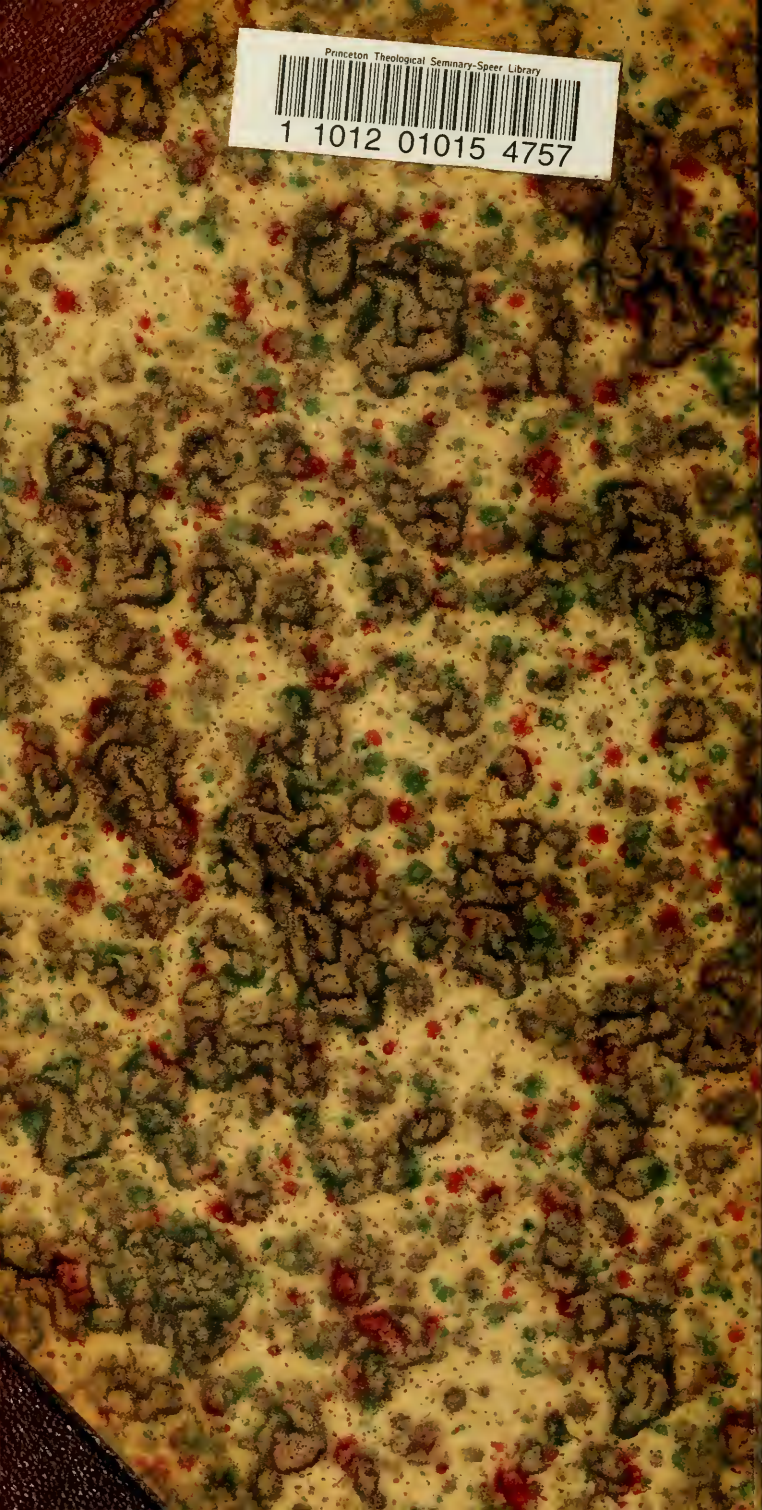
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